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MEDIEVAL DUELS

TRIAL BY COMBAT IN THE MIDDLE AGES



HISTORY

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Elizabeth's deadly dilemma

Why the Virgin Queen
couldn't save Mary,
Queen of Scots

**"Shoot, shoot and
keep shooting"**

The inside story of
a WWII tank regiment

**George III:
the tyrant who
lost America?**

THE AUTHOR OF **ABOLITION**

David Olusoga on how **Olaudah Equiano** reshaped the fight against the slave trade





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“After many months of lockdowns and closures, some form of normality seems to be returning to Britain’s heritage attractions. Museums and galleries are launching new exhibitions, and an undoubted highlight this month is **Elizabeth and Mary: Royal Cousins, Rival Queens** at the British Library. The display will chart the complex relationship between the two monarchs that ultimately led to one authorising the execution of the other. And this is also the subject of our cover feature, written by historian Susan Doran, who edited the exhibition catalogue. On page 50, Susan charts the dramatic events through 12 fascinating objects relating to the rival queens.

It’s a busy month for cinemas, too, and one standout release is *The Last Duel*, which is currently due to arrive in mid-October. The film centres on an episode of **trial by combat** in 14th-century France – a practice with long roots in European history. On page 28, Hannah Skoda explains how duels became a form of justice in medieval Europe and why, ultimately, the violent endeavour fell from favour.

While writing these words, I’ve been sporadically glancing out of my window at the people passing by. It’s not something I’d typically mention, but this month’s issue has made me think a little more about my glass aperture to the outside world. Windows don’t always attract much attention in themselves, but as Rachel Hurdley reveals on page 37, they have a fascinating history, if you only care to look.

Rob Attar
Editor



THREE THINGS I’VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

1. George admired George

Despite his unhappiness at the loss of the American colonies, King George III retained great respect for George Washington. In 1797 he called him “the greatest character of the age” (page 27).

2. Baa Baa could have been a bestseller

When Margaret Mitchell was deciding upon a name for the novel that became *Gone With the Wind*, alternative titles she considered included *Baa! Baa! Black Sheep* (page 61).

3. Tank losses were enormous

In James Holland’s feature on the Sherwood Rangers, he reveals that between D-Day and VE Day tank regiments suffered losses that amounted to 142 per cent of the total serving in tanks at any one time (page 69).



THIS ISSUE’S CONTRIBUTORS



Hannah Skoda

“Medieval law can seem arcane and bizarre – but I’m struck by how carefully and even sceptically medieval people thought about its implications. People understood how law worked and used it to their advantage.”

Hannah reveals why deadly duels were a popular means of solving disputes on page 28



James Holland

“I came across the Sherwood Rangers during a trip to Normandy in 2004. Among others, I was with David Christopherson, son of the commanding officer for much of those last 11 months of the war. It’s been a privilege to write about those who fought.”

James shares the exploits of a daring Allied tank regiment on page 62



Susan Doran

“I have long been fascinated by the problem of the succession in Elizabethan England, so I was delighted to be asked to edit the catalogue of the exciting British Library exhibition on Queen Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots.”

Susan documents the two queens’ lethal power struggles on page 50



Rachel Hurdley

“What links a teenage barmaid, a dungheap and a cabinet minister? Surprisingly, it’s windows. In my new documentary we peer through arrow slits, admire stained glass and examine a smashed pane to study war and defenestration – as seen through windows.”

Rachel examines how windows can shed new light on history on page 37

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Subscriptions & back issues
BBC History Magazine,
PO Box 3320, 3 Queensbridge,
Northampton, NN4 7BF. Basic
annual subscription rates:
UK: £48, Eire/Europe: £67,
ROW: £69



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James Holland tells the epic story of the tank regiment that won more battle honours than any other British Army unit in the Second World War

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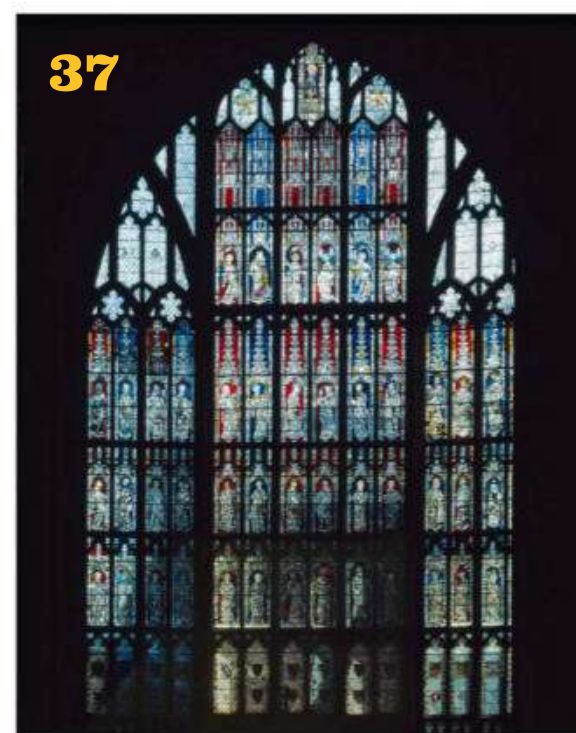
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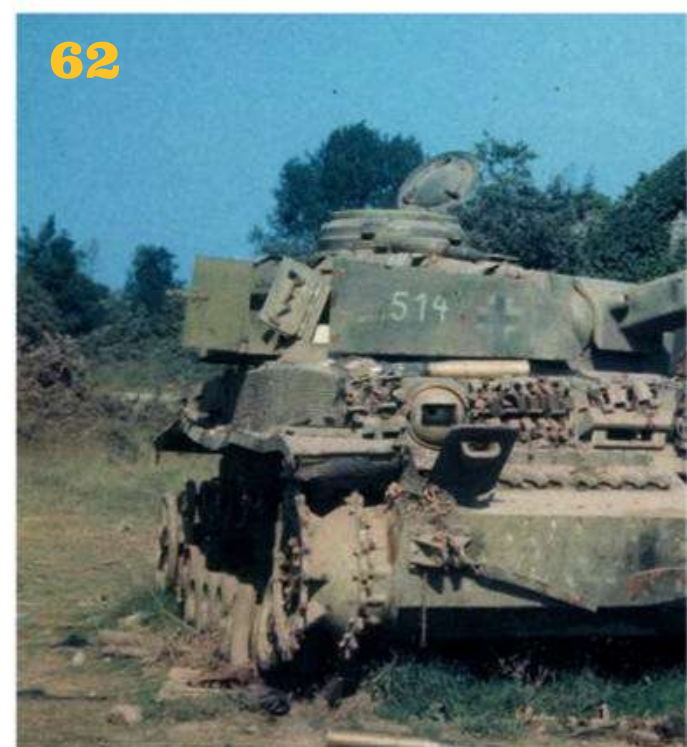
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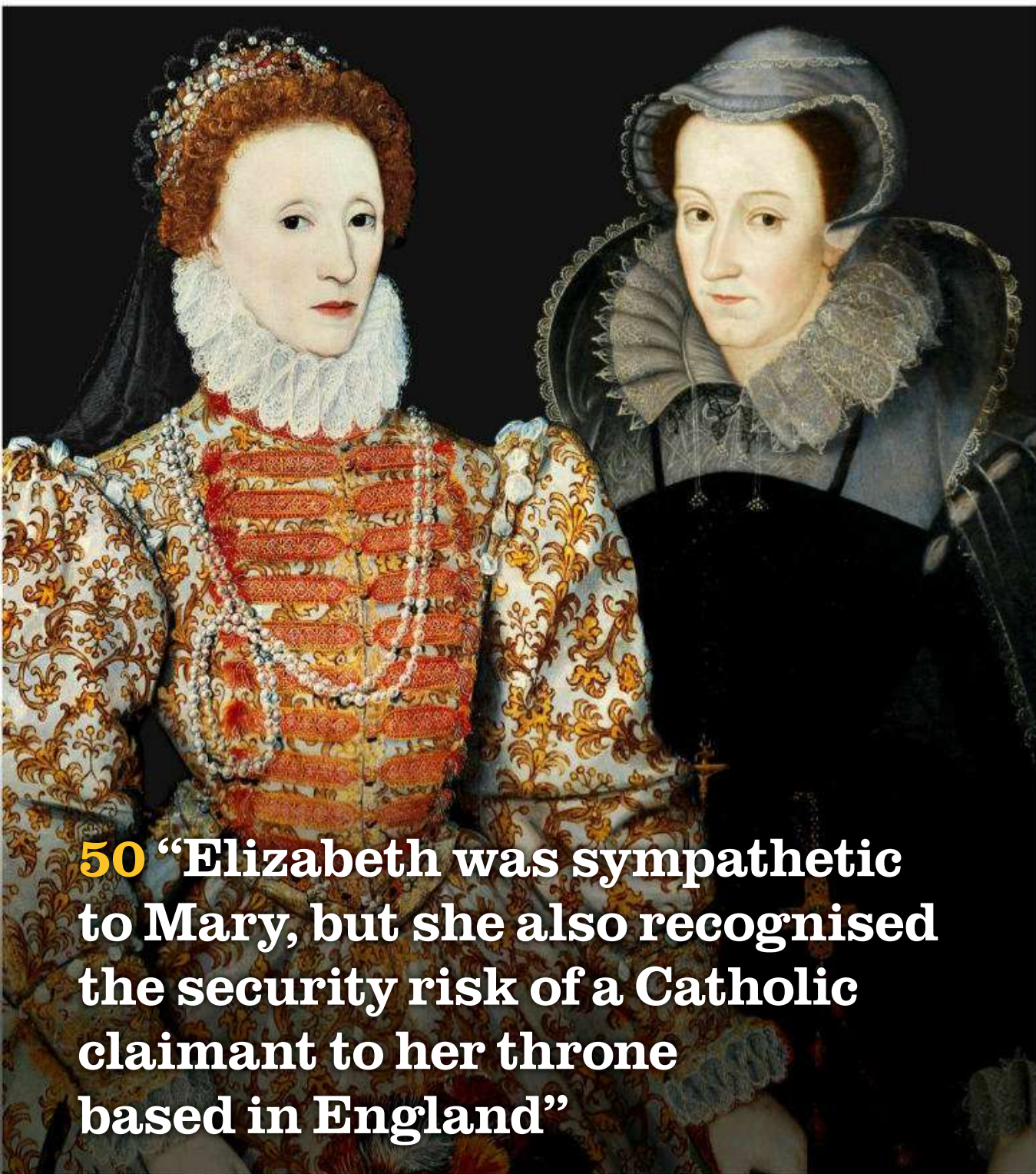
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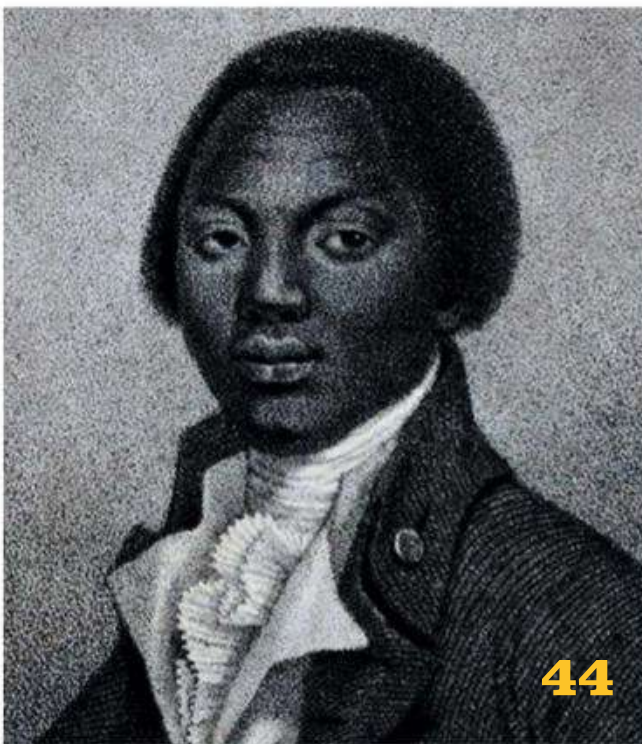
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50 “Elizabeth was sympathetic to Mary, but she also recognised the security risk of a Catholic claimant to her throne based in England”



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ENGAGE

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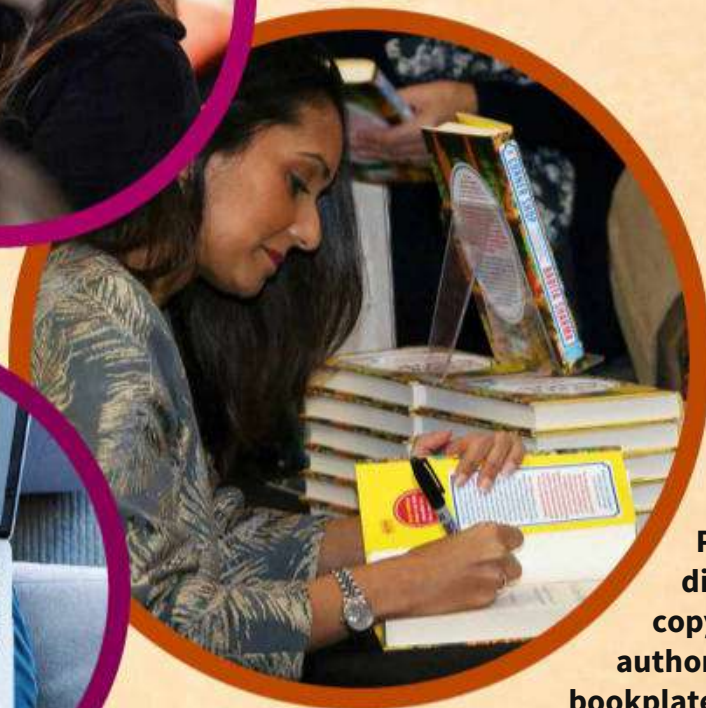
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EYE-OPENER

Thrown to the lions

This ornately decorated key handle, featuring a man locked in battle with a lion while four boys beneath gawp in terror, is a remarkable object in its own right. Yet a new study argues that it also offers evidence of such beasts being used in executions in Roman Britain.

First uncovered by University of Leicester archaeologists underneath a Roman townhouse in the city in 2017, the 10-centimetre-long bronze handle was caked in soil and initially deemed unspectacular. Careful cleaning, however, revealed its intricate design, which study co-author Dr John Pearce, from King's College London, describes as "our most detailed representation of

this form of execution found in Roman Britain".

Public execution of criminals and prisoners of war via public spectacles such as being "thrown to the beasts", or *damnatio ad bestias*, was allowed under Roman law, but direct evidence of such a violent end taking place in Britain is scarce. It is thought that, with his long hair, bushy beard and naked torso, the male figure being attacked by the lion was intended to depict a "barbarian" – a member of one of the tribes living outside of the control of the Roman empire, whose execution would have been used to symbolise the destruction of Rome's enemies.



The top and bottom of the Roman key handle and (below left) the entire artefact



TALKING POINTS

A history of violence



Events in Afghanistan have dominated the news in recent weeks, with Twitter users debating their historical context and parallels. **ANNA WHITELOCK** followed the discussion as it unfolded

Afghanistan's present and future has been a subject of much discussion, with many lamenting the lack of understanding of the region's history and its tortured relations with western powers. As historian **Olivette Otele** (@OlivetteOtele) tweeted, "I wish people had basic info about the history of the place/region... the mess didn't start with current Taliban and people there have been suffering for a very long time."

Academic **Justin Podur** (@Justinpodur) sought to provide historical context with a much-applauded thread that set the scene in 1839, the year Britain invaded Afghanistan from India and installed their own candidate, Shah Shuja, on the throne in Kabul. His thread described the process of imposing Shuja, including "rapes, looting, massacres", and the way in which, after Shuja's assassination in 1842, "the British regrouped... to get 'revenge' against the Afghans for driving them out".

Podur asked, rhetorically: "What was the 1839 British war on Afghanistan about?", following up with his take: "Basically, the British empire – whose primary goal was squeezing what would eventually be \$45tn out of India – destroyed Afghanistan to make it a 'buffer zone' against any kind of incursion."

Sean R Roberts (@robertsreport) added to the Twitter history lesson: "It is important

to remember that there is a long history of Uyghurs in Afghanistan, [including many] refugees who fled the 1949 revolution in China.

These are not 'foreign fighters' or 'jihadists', but the Taliban could claim that they are and deport them to China to win favour with Beijing."

More debate was sparked by an article by **Guy Chazan** (@GuyChazan) in the *Financial Times*, arguing that "As one of Nato's biggest and most costly foreign policy priorities of this century implodes, those lessons will be lost on Beijing. History repeats itself in the tragedy of Afghanistan." **Evan Feigenbaum** (@EvanFeigenbaum) responded, tweeting: "Some of these takes are both premature and a bit much." Historian **Peter Frankopan** (@peterfrankopan) added that "part of the problem was not that lessons from the past were not learned: but lessons from the present".

Historian and TV presenter **Dr Tessa Dunlop** (@Tessadunlop) looked closer to home. "Within our own borders Northern Ireland tells us there is no short-term fix," she wrote. "The history of Afghanistan tells the same. We knew that when we went in." Frankopan agreed that he, too, had been reminded of the not-so-distant past. "Events of the past week remind me of its mirror image: the build-up to the fall of the Berlin Wall. One brought hope. The other, fear." Certainly, at the time of writing, there is little sign of hope in the news from Afghanistan. **H**

Anna Whitelock is chair in history at City, University of London

// The mess didn't start with the Taliban. People have been suffering for a very long time //



Join the debate at twitter.com/historyextra



Hannah Boyle (centre), winner of the Historical Association's 2016–17 Great Debate, with the two runners up: Sophia Arora and Amy Brookes

EVENT

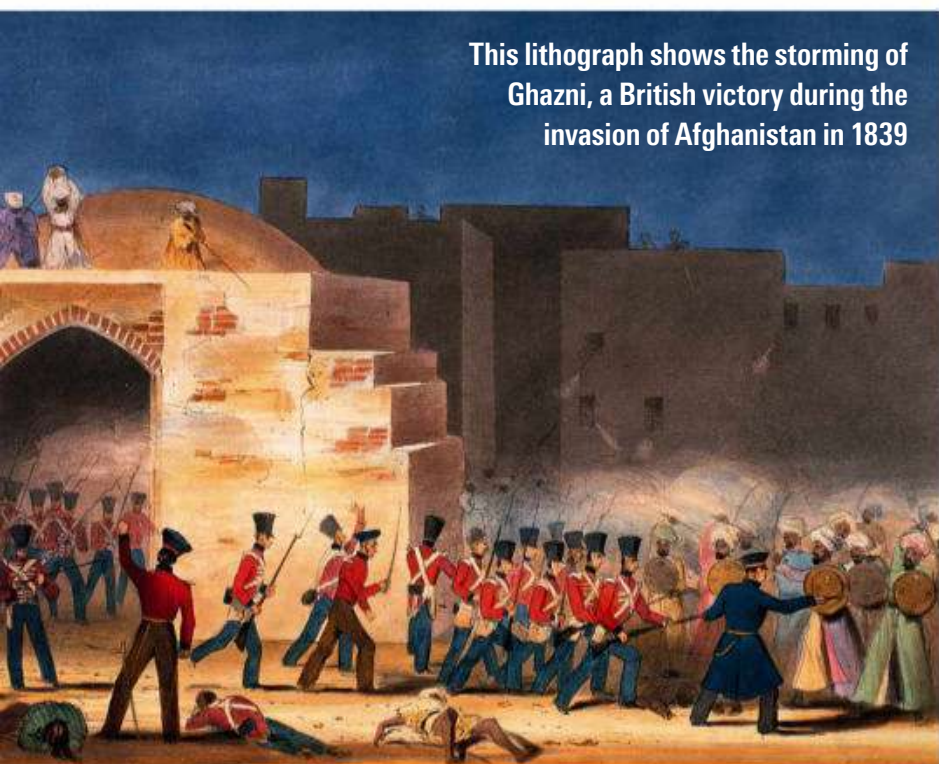
Student speaking contest returns

From the legacy of empire to the best way of tackling statues of the past's most controversial figures, history is never short of contentious subjects – and now students around the UK can get involved in the discussion again thanks to the return of a major nationwide competition.

The Great Debate, run by the Historical Association, sees students aged between 16 and 19 test their research and public speaking skills. This year's event will mark the platinum jubilee of the association's patron, Elizabeth II, by exploring the question: "Which changes of the past 70 years have affected your local area the most?" Each entrant will have five minutes to deliver their argument, which can cover any aspect of that period, before facing a couple of follow-up questions from members of the judging panel.

Disruption caused by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic means this is the first time the event has been held in person since 2019. A series of heats will take place around the UK throughout the autumn term and into the first weeks of 2022, culminating in a final – sponsored by our HistoryExtra website – at Windsor Castle in March. Winners and runners-up, and their schools, will receive a cash prize, and all finalists will win free student membership of the Historical Association.

For more details and to find out how to take part, visit history.org.uk or email greatdebate@history.org.uk. **H**



This lithograph shows the storming of Ghazni, a British victory during the invasion of Afghanistan in 1839

HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**



Archaeologists working at the site at Wem in Shropshire, aided by students from Cardiff University

▲ Experts uncover remains of “13th-century Shropshire castle”

It may seem unlikely that a structure as large as a castle could evade detection for centuries, yet that’s just the discovery that’s been made at a site in Shropshire.

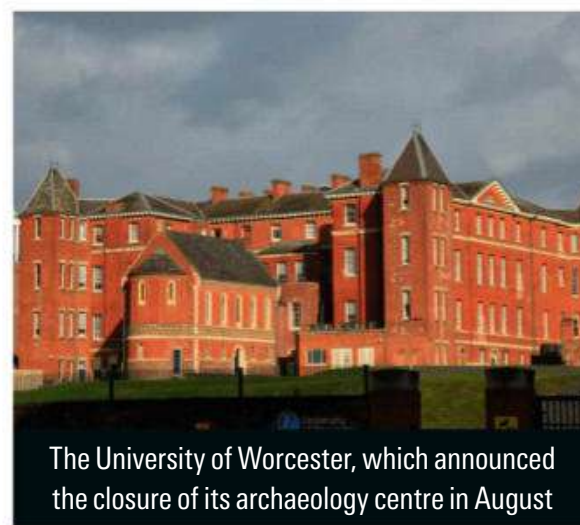
Experts working on a mound belonging to Soughton Hall, near the town of Wem, have uncovered “hefty timbers” that they think could have been part of a bridge over a castle moat. The finds made at the site, including a pilgrim’s badge and a water-carrying vessel, date from between the 13th and 15th centuries and were well-preserved due to the waterlogged ground.

Although a test dig took place at the Elizabethan manor in 2019, it was not until July that excavation work resumed. The discoveries were made with the help of students from Cardiff University, who were carrying out a dig on the mound.

“We think [that this] was a small castle that dominated the road to Wem,” said lead archaeologist Nat Jackson. “The moat around it seems to have been made by manipulating what was a sandstone peninsula created by the stream to turn it into an island.”

Archaeology centre closure sparks online petition ▼

The planned closure of a university archaeology department has prompted thousands of people to sign a petition calling for the institution to reverse its decision. Citing “very low” numbers of applications, the University of Worcester announced in August that it would no longer be offering courses in the subject from the start of the current academic year. The Council for British Archaeology called the move “another significant blow to archaeology in the UK”, pointing to a similar announcement from Sheffield University earlier in the summer.



The University of Worcester, which announced the closure of its archaeology centre in August



▲ Section of Hadrian’s Wall found near Newcastle centre

Although experts have long known that Hadrian’s Wall ran through Newcastle (pictured above) on its route across the north of the Roman province of Britannia, its precise location was a mystery. That’s no longer the case after workers replacing a water main uncovered a three-metre stretch in the area of West Road, just outside the city centre. Its composition from large stone blocks has led archaeologists to believe it was built in the project’s first phases in roughly AD 122, as later sections were made from smaller pieces.

Cave art is “new evidence of Neanderthal intelligence” ▼

Marks found in a cave system in southern Spain are evidence of early art, new research suggests. The symbols (pictured below) were created by splattering and blowing red ochre pigment, and made at various points across a period stretching back to more than 60,000 years ago. Although some experts believe that they occurred naturally, a new study published in the journal *PNAS* argues the designs were consciously created by Neanderthals. It’s among a growing body of evidence pointing to the “sister species” of *Homo sapiens* possessing more intelligence than has previously been thought.



Pagan emperor coin “was deliberately damaged” ▼

A coin dating from the fourth century AD depicting Julian the Apostate, who attempted to reintroduce paganism to the Roman empire, may have been defaced as “an act of erasure”, a British Museum listing has suggested. The coin (right), found by metal detectorists in Norfolk last year, features a gouge across the eyes – possibly a later reaction to the emperor’s rejection of Christianity when he gained power in AD 361. However, the presence of unblemished coins bearing Julian’s image in the same hoard has led other experts to caution that the marking may instead be the result of accidental damage. **H**



New light on Kristallnacht

The gunning down of a German diplomat by a Jewish teenager sparked a pogrom across Nazi Germany, escalating the anti-Semitic violence that preceded the Holocaust. The fate of the assassin has always been a mystery, but **NIGEL JONES** reveals evidence that could rewrite his story

Startling evidence has emerged that sheds new light on a dark episode in 20th century European history. *Kristallnacht* ("Crystal Night") was a pogrom of German Jews on 9 and 10 November 1938 and a precursor of the Holocaust. Hundreds of Jews were murdered, thousands beaten, and tens of thousands arrested and sent to concentration camps. Meanwhile mobs trashed and looted Jewish-owned stores and burned and destroyed at least 267 synagogues. The excuse used by the Nazis to launch the attacks was the assassination of Ernst vom Rath, a German diplomat in Paris, by a 17-year-old Jew, Herschel Grynszpan.

Taken to Germany after the Nazi conquest of France in June 1940, Grynszpan's fate has always been mysterious. He was last reported alive in Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1942, and most historians have assumed that he was killed by the Nazis. A German court officially declared him dead in 1960. However, Christa Prokisch, chief archivist at the Jewish Museum in Vienna, claims that a photograph held there proves that Grynszpan survived the war.

In 2013, Prokisch was sorting through uncatalogued photos taken at a camp for displaced persons being run by the US Army at Bamberg, Bavaria, in July 1946 when she saw a face that looked familiar. It was Herschel Grynszpan. "I recognised him immediately as I had seen so many images of him taken in 1938," she says. "He had changed and aged, of course, but the face remained the same".

Nobody believed Prokisch until she showed the photo to Grynszpan's biographer, the German historian and journalist Armin Fuhrer. Intrigued, Fuhrer subjected the image to sophisticated facial recognition software, comparing it to photos taken after Grynszpan's arrest. The test returned a 95 per cent certainty that the youth who shot vom Rath and the man in Bamberg eight years later are the same person. Now convinced, Fuhrer will present this and other discoveries about the affair in an updated edition of his 2016 biography *Herschel* and a television documentary in Germany next year.

The Bamberg photo was taken over a year after the Second World War

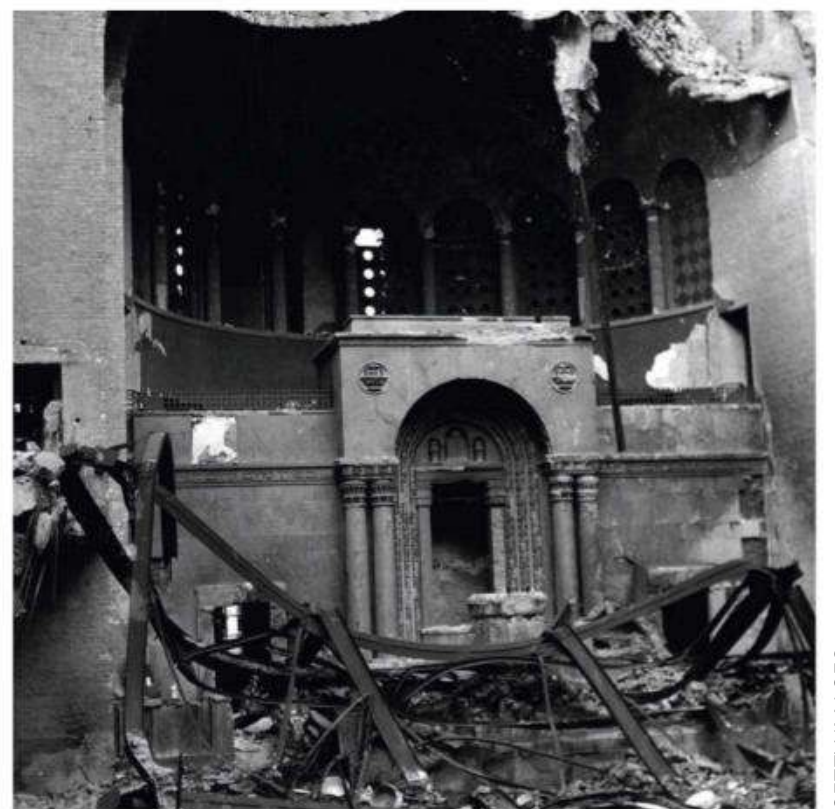
had ended during a gathering of Jews at the refugee camp who were protesting delays in letting them migrate from Germany. Prokisch and Fuhrer believe the young assassin may have been working for a Zionist organisation encouraging the emigration of Jews from Germany to Palestine.

Making an assassin

In the 1930s, Grynszpan had escaped persecution in the Third Reich by fleeing to stay with relatives abroad. At first he stayed with his uncle Wolf in Brussels and then in Paris with his uncle Abraham. Fuhrer has discovered that both men and Grynszpan supplied clothes to the communist resistance network known as the Red Orchestra to help Jews fleeing the Nazis. When, in 1938, Grynszpan's parents and brother were expelled from Germany and refused admission to Poland, they were trapped on the border, homeless and starving.

Enraged at their plight, Grynszpan purchased a pistol, called at the German embassy in Paris, and shot the first diplomat he met, 29-year-old junior official Ernst vom Rath. He made no attempt to escape and was arrested on the spot. On hearing the news, Adolf Hitler sent his

// Grynszpan fought a duel of wits with his interrogators. To prevent the Nazis from turning the trial into a political propaganda coup, he claimed his motive for the murder was personal //



Hate crimes The Tielshafer Synagogue in Berlin lies in ruins after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in November 1938. The anti-Semitic violence resulted in the destruction of at least 267 synagogues

GETTY IMAGES



Never to be seen again?

French police escort Herschel Grynszpan (centre) to a Paris court following his assassination of Ernst vom Rath. RIGHT: Grynszpan shortly after his arrest and (far right) the 1946 photo that could provide the proof that he survived the war

personal physician, Dr Karl Brandt, to treat vom Rath's injuries, but when he arrived he found the victim sitting up in bed and apparently on the mend. Nazi foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop wrote a telegram saying that vom Rath's injuries were of a "minor nature". After a phone conversation between Brandt and Hitler, however, the French doctors were excluded from the hospital and vom Rath's condition suddenly and (for the Nazis) conveniently deteriorated, and he died.

Armin Fuhrer believes that Brandt – who was hanged after the war for his part in the T4 Euthanasia murder programme and gruesome experiments on concentration camp inmates – was instructed to ensure vom Rath did not survive. The Nazis needed him dead to provide a pretext for attacks on the Jewish community. The "Crystal Night", or the "Night of Broken Glass" in reference to the smashed glass from the Jewish shopfronts, was unleashed.

The Nazi leadership had gathered in Munich for their annual commemoration of Hitler's failed Beer Hall Putsch in November 1923, and it was from there that propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels gave the green light for the pogrom. Striving to win back Hitler's favour after his career had nearly crashed over his affair with Czech film actress Lída Baarová, Goebbels ordered local leaders throughout the Reich to organise attacks on Jews and their property. He instructed police and firefighters not to interfere with the "spontaneous demonstrations" or extinguish the burning synagogues.

A further mystery

Kristallnacht caused outrage throughout the world, and the French refused to extradite Grynszpan for trial. After the fall of Paris, though, he was flown back to Germany and incarcerated in Sachsenhausen, where he was kept alongside such "VIP prisoners" as former Austrian chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg; Georg Elser, the lone assassin whose beer hall bomb had come close to killing Hitler in 1939; and British spymasters Sigismund Payne Best and



Richard Henry Stevens, who were abducted in the "Venlo incident" on the German-Dutch border. They were being kept alive to star in show trials after the war.

In captivity, Grynszpan fought a duel of wits with his interrogators. To prevent the Nazis from turning the trial into a political propaganda coup, he invented a story that his motive for the murder was personal, claiming that he had had a homosexual relationship with his victim. Fuhrer dismisses this out of hand, and has identified two of Grynszpan's girlfriends, but the assassin's story succeeded in delaying his trial. Goebbels feared the "martyred" vom Rath being identified as gay.

Grynszpan's parents and brother lived through the Holocaust and emigrated to Palestine, though his sister perished at Auschwitz. But what became of him? Fuhrer and Prokisch believe the chance discovery of the Bamberg photo means that history has to be rewritten. Rumours always persisted that Grynszpan survived the war, and now they believe they have proof. The Nazis kept meticulous records of their crimes, but there is no record of Grynszpan's death. He vanished without trace – until now.

Prokisch thinks the key to his disappearance may lie in his links with communist and Zionist organisations during the Cold War and the birth pangs of Israel. Fuhrer says: "Herschel survived the war, of that I have no doubt. But his later fate remains a mystery. Did he emigrate to Israel, and if so why did he not contact his family? Or did the Americans give him a new identity in return for him spilling his secrets? We still don't know the answer." **H**

Nigel Jones's new book, *Kitty's Salon: Sex, Spying and Surveillance in the Third Reich*, written with Urs Brunner and Dr Julia Schrammel, will be published next year



MICHAEL WOOD ON...

THE CULTURES AND DIVISIONS OF AFGHANISTAN

// A new world is emerging, reviving older connections //

“My dear boy, as long as you don’t invade Afghanistan,” prime minister Harold Macmillan told his successor, “you’ll be absolutely fine.” His words came back to

me as I watched the disaster unfold this summer, astounded by the US and UK governments’ seeming lack of foresight and any kind of historical perspective.

It was 25 years ago – can it really be that long? It seems like only yesterday – that I was in Afghanistan following the route of Alexander the Great when our track took us from Peshawar, Pakistan to Kabul. The Taliban were besieging the Afghan capital for the first time; at nightfall tracers arched across the sky and the crackle of gunfire could be heard to the south.

Our plan was to follow Alexander northwards on foot over the Hindu Kush. Before we left Kabul we went to the National Museum, which had been wrecked in the civil war. Cases in the galleries were smashed and in the cellars thousands of carefully recorded artefacts were spilled out of cupboards, with Buddha heads littering the floor. By the front door, the famous headless statue of the Kushan emperor Kanishka stood proud, soon to be vandalised by the Taliban. Evidence of Afghanistan as a unique meeting place of cultures had been looted and destroyed. In war, one casualty is always history itself.

Our cameraman Peter was ex-army, one of the many westerners hanging out in Kabul, so captivated by the country that he couldn’t leave it behind. After a few days, his contacts told us we could go, so we borrowed a

patched-up Land Rover and headed for the mountains. There are many pleasures in that kind of travel: the lightest camera gear, sleeping out, living in the moment. Breakfast was coarse flat bread and sweet black tea, the evening meal a bowl of rice and vegetables.

Around 40 miles north of Kabul, not far from the site of Alexander’s “Alexandria in the Caucasus”, the road branches into the Panjshir valley, where the sparkling ice-blue river runs between great brown ridges. The route was littered with Russian gear, tanks and armoured personnel carriers. It’s been a thoroughfare throughout history: Genghis Khan and Tamburlaine came this way too.

Afghanistan didn’t exist in the ancient or medieval worlds, of course. Its different zones were different worlds. The northern plain of Bakh (“the mother of all cities”) was part of Bactria, which stretched across the Oxus river to the province of Sogdiana, whose cities like Samarkand and Bukhara were famous for their merchants – the middle men between China and the Mediterranean. To the west, Khorasan was tied to Iran; far to the south were the deserts of Farah and Helmand. And to the east, the Kabul plain led to the Khyber Pass and north-western India, the fertile and populous first home of Vedic culture and later of the fabulous hybrid Indo-Greek civilisation of Gandhara. These regions each had their own culture and languages, and still pulled in different directions when the country of Afghanistan, within something like its present borders, emerged in the 19th century.

It was beyond the river now known as Syr Darya that Alexander halted, stopped not by Afghanistan – its reputation as a graveyard of conquerors came only in the 19th century – but by the enormous distances of central Asia. But Greeks still settled in central Asia: the historian and geographer Strabo mentions 80 towns in Sogdiana. Between the first and third centuries, the region thrived when the Kushan empire extended across Afghanistan into India. It was the same under the Moghul empire, whose founder, Babur, conqueror of north India, chose to be buried on a hillside above his beloved Kabul.

So Afghanistan’s history has been as a dynamic transformer between the worlds of central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. And that’s the prize today. As the US withdraws, China is waiting. President Xi’s “Belt and Road” initiative is already investing vast sums on infrastructure in central Asian states. A new world is emerging, reviving older connections through the Taklamakan Desert to Xi’an. Already huge sums are promised. In 2015, a Chinese billionaire created a 175ft hologram of the Bamiyan Buddhas, destroyed by the Taliban in 2001. Could this be a sign of things to come? Despite the Taliban’s return, I wouldn’t bet against it. **H**

Michael Wood

is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series, and his books include *The Story of China* (Simon & Schuster, 2020). His twitter handle is @mayavision



ILLUSTRATION BY FEMKE DE JONG



The father who's fought cancer – and is now helping future generations

When Shane was diagnosed with cancer in April 2017, his life was turned upside down. He'd gone to the doctors with concerns about a mole on his face that "looked like a love spot", and after a full-body check they discovered a suspicious mole on his back that was found to be malignant melanoma skin cancer.

The dad of two had previously worked as a landscaper in the construction industry for over 12 years, installing driveways and patios. In the summer months he'd spend hours working shirtless with no sunscreen, and would often get burnt. According to Cancer Research UK, getting sunburnt just once every two years means the risk of developing melanoma is around three times higher.

To help people who are diagnosed with cancer, you can leave a gift in your Will. This is a pledge to help fund vital research that can be felt for future generations. Any amount has the potential to make a huge impact and ensures that your wishes live on. Gifts in Wills help Cancer Research UK plan and invest in research projects that help them accelerate progress to save more lives.

When Shane found out he had melanoma, he underwent surgery to remove the cancer from his back. Lymph nodes were also taken from his groin, so specialists could perform a biopsy on them to check if the cancer had spread. Thankfully, the surgery was a success and the biopsy came back clear.

But on 25 November 2018, everything changed again. When Shane woke up that morning, a lump "like a tennis ball" had appeared in his right armpit. The melanoma cancer he'd had the previous year had spread – the lymph nodes near his armpit were now affected. He underwent surgery for a second time, where the tumour and 26 lymph nodes from under his arm were removed.

Shane also had 12 doses of immunotherapy following surgery, once a month for a year. He was given the immunotherapy drug Nivolumab, a new targeted therapy drug researched by Cancer Research UK-funded scientists that boosts people's immune system and is designed to get rid of any lingering cells. Shane said the drug made him drowsy for an afternoon, but the next day he could go back to work.

Six months into the treatment, scans were coming back clear.

Looking to the future

Speaking of his diagnosis and treatment, Shane says: "For me this has been a big learning experience. While I can't change it, I can tell my story and stop others from experiencing what I've been through."

As well as sharing his story and raising awareness of melanoma skin cancer, Shane decided to leave a gift in his Will to Cancer Research UK so that future generations can benefit from future treatments, like he did from Nivolumab. Gifts in Wills are crucial and fund a third of the charity's pioneering research. They are vital to the charity accelerating its progress to save more lives. In the last 40 years, Cancer Research UK has helped double cancer survival. But it doesn't stop there. Cancer Research UK is determined to achieve its ambition of seeing 3 in 4 people survive their cancer by 2034.

Your pledge of a gift in your Will can help their researchers make the scientific progress needed to beat cancer for future generations.

To order your free Gifts in Wills Guide today, visit cruk.org/pledge or call 0800 077 6644



Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666), the Isle of Man (1103) and Jersey (247).



**CANCER
RESEARCH
UK**

Together we will beat cancer

ANNIVERSARIES

DOMINIC SANDBROOK highlights events that took place in November in history

30 NOVEMBER 1601

Elizabeth I delivers her “golden speech”

The troubled and ailing queen poignantly proclaims her love for her subjects

During her last years, Elizabeth I cut an ageing, weary and often gloomy figure, beset by troubles personal and political. Foreign visitors noted that she wore a wig and remarked on her rotten teeth, a consequence of her enthusiasm for sugar.

When, on 30 November 1601, the queen rose to address more than 140 members of the House of Commons, most expected her to address the country's mounting economic problems. To their surprise, she instead gave a kind of farewell address, reflecting on her reign and looking forward to the judgment of the Almighty. Of the different versions of her speech, the most complete comes from the MP and diarist Hayward Townshend. In his version, Elizabeth assured them that she “never was any greedy, scraping grasper, nor a strait fast-holding prince, nor yet a waster. My heart was never set on any worldly goods, but only for my subjects' good.

“I do assure you there is no prince that loves his subjects better, or whose love can countervail our love,” said the queen. “There is no jewel, be it of never so rich a price, which I set before this jewel: I mean your love. For I do esteem it more than any treasure or riches; for that we know how to prize, but love and thanks I count invaluable. And, though God hath raised me high, yet this I count the glory of my crown, that I have reigned with your loves.”

It is, said Elizabeth, “my desire to live nor reign no longer than my life and reign shall be for your good. And though you have had, and may have, many princes more mighty and wise sitting in this state, yet you never had nor shall have, any that will be more careful and loving.” Needless to say, her audience loved it, and versions were reprinted for decades.

» For more on **Queen Elizabeth I**, see our feature on page 50

The massacres of the Second Triumvirate are depicted in this 1566 painting. From the beginning it was “drenched in blood”, says Dominic Sandbrook



GETTY IMAGES/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

A contemporary, coloured woodcut depicting the fall of the meteorite



7 NOVEMBER 1492

A fireball plummets through the sky and crashes into a field outside the walled Alsatian town of Ensisheim. When locals investigate, they discover a **127kg stony meteorite**. It can be seen in the town's museum to this day.

27 NOVEMBER 43 BC

Rome's Second Triumvirate is born

Caesar's murder leads to an uneasy, and short-lived, peace

The assassination of Julius Caesar in March 44 BC had plunged the Roman world into chaos. At first the initiative seemed to lie with his assassins: Brutus, Cassius and their senatorial allies. When they fled east, it passed to Caesar's chief lieutenant, the rugged Mark Antony. But then a new contender emerged: the murdered commander's great nephew and adopted heir, Octavian, who was inexperienced, but possessed of great ambition and remarkable political skill.

By the following spring, civil war seemed inevitable – not just between the Caesarian faction and the so-called Liberators, but between Antony and Octavian themselves. In April 43 BC, Octavian's troops defeated Antony's army in Modena, northern Italy, forcing him back into Gaul. Antony responded by striking a deal with an old Caesarian officer, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, who commanded the army in Spain. And then, to universal surprise, Octavian did something entirely unexpected. Instead of taking them both on, he struck a deal of his own with them instead.

Meeting near Bologna in November, the three men came to an arrangement. After two days of talks, the result – passed into law on 27 November – was the "Three-Man Commission for Organising the State", better known as the Second Triumvirate. From now on, the three triumvirs could pass laws without the approval of the Senate or the Roman people, name magistrates as they pleased and make judgments with no risk of appeal. They were, in other words, dictators.

From the start, the triumvirate was drenched in blood. To raise money, the triumvirs initiated a programme of confiscations and executions, targeting their old political critics. But the triumvirate was inherently unstable, riven by competing ambitions. First Lepidus was pushed aside; then Antony and Octavian turned on each other. And when Antony killed himself, Octavian became the first Roman emperor.



An early 19th-century illustration of the Theater an der Wien, where *Fidelio* was first performed



20 NOVEMBER 1805

With Vienna under French occupation, Napoleon's officers pack into the Theater an der Wien to watch **the premiere of *Fidelio***, the only opera by composer Ludwig van Beethoven. As few are interested in German opera, the reception is less than ecstatic.



GETTY IMAGES

Fire fighters in Birmingham survey the damage done to the Tavern in the Town pub in 1974. One witness to the attack said there was "blood and bodies everywhere"

21 NOVEMBER 1974

Birmingham reels from bombings

Blasts rip through two local pubs, leaving 21 dead

Thursday night in Birmingham in late 1974: it was payday and the pubs were heaving. The Tavern in the Town, not far from New Street station, was packed, the air thick with conversation and cigarette smoke. Just after 8.15pm, a few drinkers

heard a muffled thump. Though none of them knew it, a bomb had gone off in another busy pub a few moments' walk away, the Mulberry Bush.

Ten minutes later, there was a gigantic bang – and the roof fell in on the Tavern in the Town. Outside, the survivors told tales of unimaginable horror. One bystander said he had seen "bodies and blood everywhere". Another witness said: "There were women and young girls screaming, blood pouring everywhere. I saw one man who seemed to have half his body blown off. It was horrible."

In total, 21 people were killed that evening in November 1974. Although the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) have never officially admitted responsibility for the attack, at an inquest in 2019 a former IRA

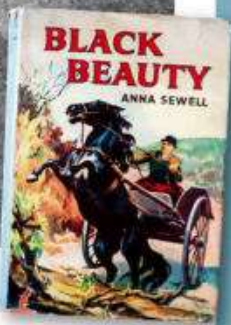
intelligence head testified that the group had carried out the bombing, and a British jury subsequently found that the victims were unlawfully killed by the IRA.

On the night of the attack, the *Birmingham Post* had received a phone call containing a vague warning, but too late for the pubs to be cleared in time.

Under intense public pressure, the police arrested six men originally from Northern Ireland who had lived in Birmingham since the 1960s, and beat confessions out of some of them. Sentenced to life imprisonment, the men were only released in 1991, and the true killers have never been charged. And so, the bombings became synonymous with a gross miscarriage of justice, rather than the loss and suffering inflicted by republican violence.



A portrait of Anna Sewell, author of children's classic *Black Beauty* (right)



24 NOVEMBER 1877

Black Beauty hits the shelves

The anti-animal-cruelty tale enthralls millions of readers

Anna Sewell was not a lucky woman. Born to Quaker parents in Norfolk in 1820, she spent her childhood following her father's job as a salesman and then a banker. Initially educated at home by her mother, she started attending a school in Stoke Newington, London when she was about 12. But then one day, she was running home in the rain and slipped, badly injuring both her ankles.

In that instant, Sewell's life changed forever. She never truly recovered from the accident: unable to walk without a crutch or stand for long, her mother wrote of her "life of constant frustration". For the rest of her life Sewell lived with her parents, blighted by severe pain and troubled by religious doubt.

Her consolation was her love of animals. Due to her injury, Sewell relied on horses to get about, and she became a passionate opponent of cruelty to animals. In 1871, she decided to write a book "to induce kindness, sympathy, and an understanding treatment of horses". The innovation, though, was that Sewell wrote from the horse's perspective.

The result, published in November 1877 by Jarrold & Sons, was *Black Beauty: His Grooms and Companions, The Autobiography of a Horse*. Supposedly "translated from the original equine", it was a colossal hit, selling tens of millions of copies worldwide.

Sewell died five months after publication, just long enough to see *Black Beauty* become a success. One scholar calls it "the most influential anti-cruelty novel of all time". **H**

Dominic Sandbrook is a historian, author and broadcaster. His new series of history books for children, *Adventures in Time* (Particular Books), is available now

WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER...

When the paper poppy became a symbol of remembrance

BY **FIONA REID**

One hundred years ago, in 1921, paper poppies were first sold to raise money for returned soldiers of the First World War. In postwar society, many veterans struggled to find homes, employment and financial security, so associations were formed to campaign for their rights. Sometimes, these efforts turned violent, causing great anxiety in a British political establishment still reeling from the Russian Revolution and postwar political radicalism across Europe.

Yet when a number of ex-servicemen's groups combined to form the British Legion, with Field Marshal Earl Haig as its president, veterans' associations started to become more widely popular and part of the establishment rather than a force for opposition. As part of this process, the British Legion introduced the idea of selling paper poppies as a fundraising campaign to alleviate the material distress that lay at the root of veteran discontent and political agitation.

In its first year, the Legion sold 9 million poppies, entrenching the deeply felt symbolism attached to the poppy since the 1915 publication of the poem *In Flanders Fields* by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae. Throughout the 1920s, most British people chose to wear poppies every 11 November, but attempts to unify the nation in a shared memory were never completely successful. In 1933, the Co-operative Women's Guild introduced the pacifist white poppy to counter the supposed militarism inherent in the so-called Flanders poppy, inspired by the poppies that grew on the battlefields. Many veterans reacted angrily and sometimes destroyed the white poppy wreaths left at war memorials.

Commemorative events were scaled back during the Second World War, and poppy-wearing remained limited until the 1990s when the British Legion campaigned successfully to reintroduce the two-minute silence. Since then, poppy-wearing has become widespread not just on Armistice Day but in the weeks leading up to 11 November. It is now unimaginable for a public figure or a BBC journalist to appear without wearing a poppy in early November.

Wearing the poppy is no neutral act. It has always been political and highly symbolic; it has always been contested and has served to highlight national divisions as well as shared myths and memories. Does wearing the poppy glorify war, or does it remind us of its tragedies? There are many responses to that question, but after 100 years, wearing the poppy reminds us that the after-effects of war endure and that we still have no answer to the question posed by the Scottish poet Tom Scott: "Why are men always making war rather than the things they need?" **H**

// Wearing the poppy has always been political, highlighting divisions as well as shared myths //



A British Legion poster, c1923. Today, the paper red poppy is a ubiquitous feature of Remembrance Day events



Dr Fiona Reid is the associate dean at Newman University in Birmingham, and author of

Broken Men: Shell Shock, Treatment and Recovery in Britain 1914-30 (Continuum, 2010)

LETTERS



Ergot growing on wheat.
Ian MacDonald suggests
the fungus was a factor in
the events in Salem in 1692

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Wrapped up in books

Thank you for the recent feature on Sir Walter Scott (*The Man Who Invented Scotland?*, September). For many of us, the way into history has been through the door marked “literature”, and so we welcome the obvious connections between the two disciplines. I would urge more of the same, for isn’t reading literature written in the past a form of time travel? Do we not live and breathe the Georgians in Austen’s novels, the Victorians in Dickens and the First World War in Sassoon and Owen?

I would also argue that modern novels with a historical setting have a place in lighting the fires and feeding our faculties of historical analysis. I am currently reading the *Poldark* series and enjoying its rich historical context, from mining and smuggling to the Napoleonic wars. (Winston Graham obviously enjoyed the research!) And, of course, as you showed in

the Scott feature, novels that look to the past reveal as much about the times in which they were written as the historical period they describe.

A regular feature on historical fiction, both contemporaneous with the events described and looking back from a later standpoint, written with an historian’s critical eye would be more than

welcome as would even more about past writers in their social and historical context.

Keep up the good work, and let us continue enjoying our time-travelling – even if we sometimes need to readjust our focus when narrative necessity and historical veracity clash.

Alban O’Brien, Dorset

Northern exposure

Your feature on Sir Walter Scott mentioned George IV’s visit to Scotland in 1822. King George was rather portly and his Highland kilt, after a few hours touring the area, had started to ride up, showing even more of his pink tight-clad legs than was decent. A little boy in the crowd asked his mother why the king was showing so much leg. His mother replied that, as the royals came so seldom to Scotland, the Scots were entitled to see as much of them as possible!

Jenny Farmer, Bristol

A Salem suspicion

In her article examining events in Salem in 1692 (September) Ellie Cawthorne rightly mentions cold weather and poor harvests as possible causes of stress and anxiety in the community, but they may have triggered something even more serious.

In 1976, Professor Linnda R Caporael highlighted the fact that the spring of 1691 in Salem had been warm and rainy, and the summer hot and stormy – weather that generated the swampy conditions ideal for the growth of ergotism in farmland areas.

Ergot is a fungus infecting rye, and the convulsive strain of ergot poisoning can lead to muscle contractions, hallucinations and other severe medical problems. Rye was a staple grain in Salem, harvested in August but not threshed for winter storage until November, and this afforded the fungus ample time to evolve before it was consumed.

Epidemics of ergotism have been known for centuries. A change in farming practices and a preference for cultivating wheat have stemmed the tide, but a rare outbreak in north-west England in the 1920s was attributed to the consumption of rye bread.

It may be that an ergotism outbreak was not the sole cause of events in Salem. It was quite possibly exploited, exaggerated and manipulated by members of the community for their own purposes, but it does at least deserve a mention when we analyse the horror of what happened.

Ian MacDonald, Essex

Morality play

Thank you for the fascinating article on Salem. Readers familiar with Arthur Miller’s 1953 play *The Crucible* will appreciate the way in which the playwright used people involved to explore the moral and emotional issues of the time, as well as of the era of McCarthyism. One inspiring but heart-breaking moment is the death of Giles Corey [a farmer accused of witchcraft]. “A fearsome

man,” he was an unexpected hero, in life and in the play.

Linda Hepburn, Chatham

A hidden heroine

It was interesting to read about the evolution of workhouses in *How Gruelling Was the Workhouse?* (September), but I would have liked to have read more about the role of women. Our charity, WayfinderWoman, had a Heritage Lottery Funded project, Women of Eastbourne, in which we highlighted the work of Marie Corbett (1859–1932). She set out to reform conditions in workhouses and, especially, to protect children. In 1894, she was one of the first women in the UK to be a Rural District Councillor and a Guardian, standing for an extraordinary 36 years.

Focusing first on Uckfield, Corbett set about finding people in the community who were willing to open their homes and foster children. She went on to help children in the neighbouring parish of Eastbourne, where the workhouse had a reputation for harsh and callous treatment. She had soon placed every eligible young child in a suitable home.

At her peak, she had 100 children under her care. Each was paid for: five shillings per week went to the foster family for their keep. Corbett received their school reports and took them to the dentist. Her care and interest for her family of orphans was unprecedented.

Laura Murphy, chair, the WayfinderWoman Trust, Eastbourne

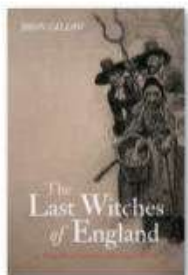
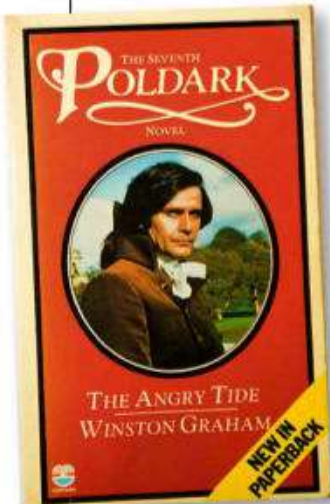
A nation rebuilt

I’m writing in response to your article *The Games that Redefined Japan* (August). I was in Tokyo in 1964 as a US Air Force



A 19th-century photo of Marie Corbett, who Laura Murphy argues played a key role in workhouse reform

HELEN WARREN, WAYFINDERWOMAN TRUST/ALAMY



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is *The Last Witches of England: A Tragedy of Sorcery and Superstition* by John Callow. You can read our review of the book on page 78



Tokyo in 1964, the year that it hosted the Summer Olympics. Reader Rick Weintraub observed the city's transformation first-hand as a young US Air Force officer

officer, and observed first-hand the rebuilt city and society. As a 26-year-old, I was curious as to how an American military person would be received. The city was spotless, the people courteous and the young teens eager to engage in speaking English.

The aura of the emperor and the imperial palace seemed undiminished in the eyes of the Japanese, yet there appeared to be great expectations for the future as the economy was exploding. The yen was 360 to the dollar, and the "made in Japan" derogatory was abating causing us to purchase many cameras, watches and items of jewellery. Needless to say, there was little surprise as Japan was resurrected in the years following.

Rick Weintraub, Texas

Coastal defence

I read with interest about the last battle on British soil (Q&A, September). It's a shame that it didn't mention the true heroine of the aborted French invasion at Fishguard in 1797.

As you described, a small force of French soldiers landed and were challenged by the Pembroke Yeomanry. But one of the heroes was actually a 47-year-old cobbler's wife, Jemima Nicholas (known as "Jemima Fawr"), who single-handedly captured a dozen or so French invaders and imprisoned them in the nearby St Mary's Church before setting off again to find more!

Terry Simpson, Manchester

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Vol 22 No 11 – November 2021

BBC History Magazine is published by Immediate Media Company London Limited under licence from BBC Studios who help fund new BBC programmes.

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► Page 34



AMERICA'S

King George III has long been cast as the crazed despot who squandered America.

Yet, argues **Andrew Roberts**, this grim characterisation is the result not of hard facts but a historical stitch-up



FALL GUY



Prejudiced picture

A portrait of George III based on a work from 1799–1800. American representations of a cruel, pompous, tyrannical monarch are “wildly inaccurate”, writes Andrew Roberts

The real George III

The words ring down the ages: “A prince, whose character is marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.” Thomas Jefferson’s description of King George III in the Declaration of Independence has been taken virtually as holy writ in the United States, where scarcely a day goes by when George is not described as a tyrant, despot or dictator in some newspaper or website. In Britain the verdict is predictably less harsh, but he is still primarily known as the mad king who suffered from a rare disease of the blood called porphyria and lost the American colonies, probably *because* he was mad.

Thomas Paine, one of the greatest propagandists of the 18th century, called George the “cruellest sovereign tyrant of this age”, a “butcher” and “that wicked tyrannical brute (nay worse than brute) of Great Britain”. This theme was picked up by the Whig historians of the 19th century: George Otto Trevelyan described George as “a ruler who cherished every abuse in church and state”. Not to be outdone, his son George Macaulay Trevelyan, in his hugely influential *History of England*, castigated “the attempt of George III to recover the powers of the crown”, and put Britain’s defeat in the American War of Independence entirely down to “the unbending stubbornness of George III”.

Today, Lin-Manuel Miranda’s brilliant and award-winning *Hamilton: An American Musical* portrays George III as comic yet cruel, camp yet sinister. “You’ll remember you belong to me,” a sardonic, preening, pompous monarch sings in his cameo appearances, and: “I will kill your friends and family to remind you of my love.”

All these negative portrayals of the king are wildly inaccurate historically, as the ongoing release of more than 200,000 pages from the Royal Archives, thanks to the magnificent Georgian Papers Programme, proves. Far from being a brute, George III emerges from them as an enlightened monarch, devoted to the constitution, and almost a Renaissance prince when it came to his patronage of the arts and culture.

Moreover, his five bouts of mental illness – the last of which lasted a decade – did not derive from porphyria (see the box on the opposite page). And since he was not afflicted with “The King’s Malady” at all between 1765 and 1788, it could not have affected the American War of Independence, which broke out in April 1775 and ended in 1783.

Land of the free

Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* defines a tyrant as either “An absolute monarch, governing



FAR FROM BEING A BRUTE, GEORGE EMERGES AS AN ENLIGHTENED MONARCH, DEVOTED TO THE CONSTITUTION



Cruel character

Jonathan Groff as George III in *Hamilton: An American Musical*. The king’s portrayal as a spiteful tyrant fits with past representations

imperiously” or “A cruel despotic and severe master”, and George was none of those. The American colonies were among the freest societies in the world in the 1760s and up until the Boston Tea Party in December 1773. The overwhelming majority of their laws were created by Americans themselves in their provincial assemblies, and assented to by an (often-absentee) royal governor and (often American-born) lieutenant-governor. The colonial press was, as the American historian Richard Brookhiser recently put it, “the freest in the world”, and the presence of the British State was minimal – one colony had only 17 officials in the pay of the king. The Stamp Act – a revenue-producing measure on paper products, designed to fund the defence of the 13 colonies – was meant to raise between £45,000 and £60,000 each year from 1.9 million American colonists, a miniscule amount.

If Thomas Jefferson had wanted to see true tyranny and despotism, there were plenty of contemporaneous examples from which to choose. The Spanish crushed an uprising against their rule in Louisiana in 1768 and executed the rebel leaders. In Poland, which was partitioned between Austria, Russia and Prussia in 1772, liberty was entirely



Tipping point

American colonists throw British tea into Boston's harbour during the Boston Tea Party, in this 1846 lithograph. Before this they were "among the freest societies in the world"

extinguished. The Russians' bloodthirsty campaign of savage executions and reprisals in the regions affected by the Pugachev Uprising against Catherine the Great in 1773–75 ended when Pugachev himself was beheaded and dismembered in Moscow in January 1775, something that George III would never have done to Jefferson, John Adams, George Washington or Thomas Paine. Indeed, the British were desperate for a peaceful solution to the crisis even long after the initial bloodshed at Lexington and Concord.

Serious blunders

Nor was George even primarily responsible for the remarkable series of policy errors made by British governments in the 1760s and 1770s, except insofar as he appointed the prime ministers who perpetrated them. "The king," the cabinet minister Lord Hillsborough told Thomas Hutchinson, the hardline former governor of Massachusetts, in February 1775, "always will leave his own sentiments and conform to his ministers, though he will argue with them, and very sensibly;

WHAT LAY BEHIND THE KING'S MADNESS?

It was long believed that George III suffered from porphyria, but now experts have shed new light on his condition

From the mid-1960s until 2010 it was generally believed that "The King's Malady" from which George III suffered in 1765, 1788–89, 1801, 1804 and 1810–20 was the rare blood disease porphyria. This was a consequence of a theory vigorously promoted by Dr Ida Macalpine and her son Dr Richard Hunter in their book in the late sixties. The theory gained lasting popular traction in large part from its repetition in Alan Bennett's 1991 play *The Madness of George III*, and the subsequent movie adaptation in 1994, in both of which porphyria was presented as the concluding diagnosis of "The King's Malady".

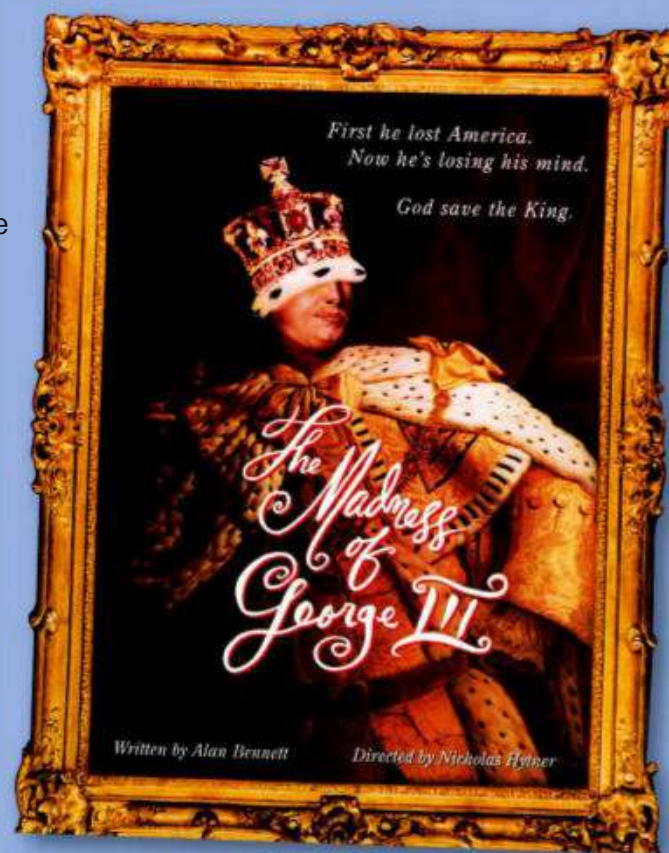
It is now clear that the porphyria theory was wrong. It was based on a large number of misconceptions and a highly selective use of evidence; it contained factual errors, flawed reasoning and the ignoring or downplaying of evidence that contradicted the authors' thesis. Macalpine and Hunter had no clinical experience in diagnosing or treating porphyria, and presented an intellectually disingenuous case that the illness was physiological rather than psychological. This was a thesis that broadly aligned with various other theories they had expressed regarding mental illness in general, but crucially it did not fit the facts of George III's actual condition.

Modern medical opinion has concluded that in fact the king experienced recurrent manic depressive psychosis. A study undertaken in 2013 by the Operational Criteria in Studies of Psychotic Illness Programme confirmed that the king's symptoms in the 1788–89 episode were consistent with mania with psychosis. Moreover, neurology professor Peter Garrard, from the specialist health university St George's, University of London, used a computer analysis of the language of the king's letters to argue that he experienced periods of acute mania – a hyperactive condition akin to the manic phase of bipolar disorder. Garrard and his team programmed a computer to make comparisons between the letters written when the king was mentally sound and those written when he was ill. These exposed a set of significant linguistic differences.

"Making retrospective diagnoses in historical figures is fraught with difficulties, especially in the field of psychiatry, but the case for bipolar disorder rather

than one of the porphyria diseases, is compelling," states Sir Simon Wessely, regius chair of psychiatry at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, King's College London. Wessely believes that the porphyria diagnosis put forward by Macalpine and Hunter was more a reflection of some of the schisms within psychiatry in the 1960s than a convincing account of the illness of George III. He concludes: "The evidence of elation, handwriting change, pressure of speech, disinhibited behaviour, occasional violence, disorders of thought (that is, psychosis) and so on all point toward acute mania, which is part of what we used to call manic depression, but now more often is referred to as bipolar disorder."

// The porphyria theory was full of factual errors, flawed reasoning and the ignoring or downplaying of contradictory evidence //



The Madness of King George (1994) cemented a misconception of the cause of the king's mental illnesses

but if they adhere to their own opinion he will say, ‘Well, do you choose it to be so? Then let it be.’ And sometimes he had known him add, ‘You must take the blame upon yourself.’” These are not the words of a tyrant.

Part of the reason that historians reached the conclusion that George was a driving force behind the Coercive Acts (four acts of parliament designed to punish Massachusetts for the Boston Tea Party) was that in 1867 WB Donne published only his side of the correspondence with Lord North, not both. Only when the letters from the king are read in conjunction with the ones from North does it become clear that the king was following, supportively, initiatives from the government, and not the other way around.

If George III had held dictatorial tendencies, he would surely in the almost 60 years of his reign have vetoed a parliamentary bill of which he disapproved – but he never once did, despite having the constitutional right to do so. The descriptions of George III as a “dictator” abated somewhat in the 1930s, when politicians and historians were given a close look at what dictators genuinely looked like, but have reappeared in recent years.

The fundamental reason the American colonies broke away was that by the end of the Seven Years’ War in 1763, they had developed to such a stage of political maturity that they could thrive as an independent state. Freed by Britain from their fear of the French and Native American threats, they saw their chance and opportunistically took it. That they did this was in fact a tribute to the Americans’ understandable – and by then perfectly reasonable – desire for independence from their mother country. It was not, however, for greater “liberty” and “freedom”

NO MAJOR COUNTRY
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as individuals, which they already enjoyed far more of than almost any community on the planet at the time.

It is perfectly true that George tried to prevent the colonies from breaking away, but which 18th-century monarch would have acted in any other way? Fighting to retain his American colonies did not make George a tyrant, since there was no major country in the world at that period in history that would have allowed 13 of its colonies simply to secede without a fight. Indeed, the United States’ own experience with 11 of its Southern states over 80 years later underlines the point. It was not until Norway split from Sweden in 1905, the United States gave independence to the Philippines in 1946, and Britain to India the following year that countries began to go through such processes of separation without recourse to open conflict.

George III did what any constitutional monarch would have done during the American Revolution, which was to support



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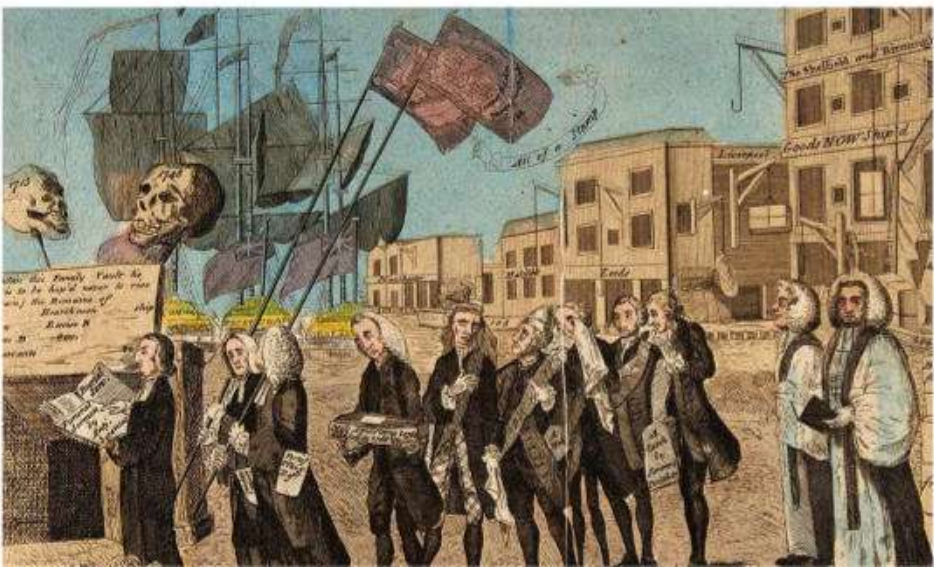
TIMELINE How Britain lost its grip on the American colonies

23 March 1765

The British parliament passes the Stamp Act to try to help pay for the cost of stationing troops for the protection of the American colonies in the wake of the Seven Years’ War

March 1766

Repeal of the Stamp Act after protests by American colonists



June 1767

Introduction of the Townshend Duties on goods imported into the American colonies

16 December 1773

The Boston Tea Party, which sees 45 tonnes of tea thrown into Boston harbour by American self-styled “Sons of Liberty”

5 September – 26 October 1774

The First Continental Congress of the American colonies meets at Philadelphia, with representatives of each colony except Georgia

British politicians walk through London’s docks mourning the repeal of the Stamp Act in this 1766 satirical engraving





Bitter defeat

Lord Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown in this c1787–1828 painting. King George’s generals served him disastrously during the war

his government in their belief that parliament had the right to impose taxes on the colonies in order to pay for part of their own protection. If he had opposed that, he would rightly have been denounced as a dictator, riding roughshod over the elected legislature at Westminster. The right to tax America was generally accepted in Britain at the time by the king, but crucially also by the prime minister, cabinet, the vast majority of peers and MPs, the law officers of the crown and the American department of the civil service. Moreover, it was confirmed in two general elections in 1774 and 1780 also to be the view of the British electorate.

Dreadful generals

Similarly, just as George was let down by his ministers, and especially his prime ministers, in the period leading up to the American war, subsequently he was even more disastrously served by the senior British generals who were sent out to fight that war. These military men – Sir Henry Clinton, Thomas Gage, Lord Cornwallis, John Burgoyne, Sir William Howe and his brother Richard, Lord Howe – were upper-middle and upper-class Whigs who followed the policy of conciliation wherever possible, trying to win hearts and minds. Cornwallis believed for much of the war that if the British adopted what he called the “gentlest methods which the nature of this business will admit of”, the loyalism to which he believed most Americans still ascribed might have won out. Yet militarily, loyalism was never the decisive factor that British generals hoped it would be.

Much of the blame for losing the war must lie with General Sir William Howe’s failure to carry out Britain’s overall strategic plan to split New England from the rest of the colonies by controlling the Hudson River. This was meant to be achieved by General John Burgoyne marching down from Canada



19 April 1775

First shots are fired at Lexington and Concord, after which British general Thomas Gage comes under siege in Boston

4 July 1776

The Declaration of Independence is printed in Philadelphia, having been passed two days earlier by the Second Continental Congress

26 September 1777

General William Howe occupies Philadelphia in a strategic blunder, rather than adhering to Lord George Germain’s plan to split New England from the rest of the colonies. This directly leads to the events of 17 October

17 October 1777

General John Burgoyne (pictured) capitulates with his entire force to the American general Horatio Gates at Saratoga. This encourages France to enter the war in 1778, Spain in 1779 and the Netherlands in 1780

19 October 1781

Lord Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown. This leads to Britain eventually recognising American independence on 3 September 1783

The battle of Lexington, which (along with the battle of Concord) marked the beginning of the American War of Independence





Global conflict In this 1782 cartoon George III stands with half a crown (far left), and on the far right America clutches the other half of the crown. In the middle are the wounded figures of France, the Netherlands and Spain, who all fought for America and now seek more land to repay their efforts



America's friend
George III wears his coronation robes in this 18th-century portrait. The king sought good relations with the independent United States

GEORGE III NEVER OWNED, SOLD OR BOUGHT A SLAVE; IN 1807 HE FORMALLY ABOLISHED THE SLAVE TRADE

to Albany in New York State, while generals William Howe and Henry Clinton moved up the Hudson from New York City. Disastrously, Howe instead decided to capture Philadelphia, leaving Burgoyne stranded at Saratoga, near Albany, where he was captured along with his whole army in October 1777. This colossal mishap encouraged France to enter the war on the side of the Americans, turning the colonial struggle into a full-scale global war. None of that can be blamed on a monarch more than 3,000 miles away.

Doomed to defeat

There is a central irony that had George III indeed been the ruthless despot that he was made out to have been by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, Britain would have had a much better chance of winning the war. If the British generals had been willing to cause social chaos in the south by arming enslaved people; or wreak havoc in the west by arming a Native American alliance; or to raze Boston and Philadelphia in the way that Rear Admiral Cockburn and Major-General Ross were to raze Washington DC in 1814, when Britain was fighting the US during the War of 1812; or to treat American prisoners in the same harsh manner that the Duke of Cumberland had treated Scottish Highlanders in the aftermath of the 1745 rebellion, then the war might have gone differently. The British both precipitated the revolution and lost the American War of Independence in part

because George was not a tyrant.

Nor was he a "brute". George founded the Royal Academy, still the premier institution for artists in the UK. He set up electrical experiments at the Pantheon; ensured John Harrison was paid for measuring longitude; worked on thousands of pages of essays for Lord Bute, exploring topics such as constitutional theory, political economy and moral philosophy; paid a pension to Rousseau; and discussed Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists with Monsieur Otto during the Peace of Amiens. We know from the politician Lord Glenbervie that: "The king spends most of his time in it [his library] when he is in town." This library held 65,250 books, 19,000 tracts and pamphlets, and over 40,000 maps, which were presented to the British Museum after his death.

In the 1750s, George wrote essays on the political philosopher Montesquieu, approving of his refutation of the reasons being

given by anti-abolitionists of slavery. "The propagation of the Christian religion was the first reason," he noted of their arguments, "the next was the [Indigenous] Americans differing from them in colour, manners and customs, all of which are too absurd to take the trouble of refuting. But what shall we say for a European traffic in black slaves, the very reasons urged for it will be perhaps sufficient to make us hold such practice in execration." George never owned, bought or sold a slave, and signed the legislation abolishing the slave trade in 1807 – but he did not campaign for the abolition of the practice, despite being a devout Christian. When in 1776 Jefferson – who was a slave-owner – suggested inserting a clause into the Declaration of Independence criticising George for not abolishing the slave trade, it was struck out, presumably on the grounds of gross hypocrisy.

"Greatest character of the age"

George was a humorous, good-natured and immensely cultured person. He had his faults like everyone, in his case a certain self-righteousness that must have grated on his prime ministers. But he was a generous enough figure to describe George Washington as "the greatest character of the age" in March 1797. When he met John Adams, the first American ambassador to Britain, he said: "I will be very frank with you. I was the last to consent to the separation; but the separation having been made, and having become inevitable, I have always said, and I say now, that I would be the first to meet the friendship of the United States as an independent power."

Of the Continental Congress's libels against George III in the Declaration of Independence, former Massachusetts governor Thomas Hutchinson wrote of how, "A tyrant, in modern language, means, not merely an absolute and arbitrary but a cruel, merciless sovereign. Have these men given an instance of any one act in which the king has exceeded the just powers of the crown as limited by the English constitution? Has he ever departed from known, established laws, and substituted his own will as the rule of his actions? Has there ever been a prince by whom subjects in rebellion have been treated with less severity, or with longer forbearance?" The questions were intended to be rhetorical, but even with the benefit of two and a half centuries' hindsight, the answer is still no. **H**

Erudite ruler

The Georgian Papers (shown left: ledgers from the early 1800s; and above: pages from George III's essay collection) reveal the king's intellectual passions



Andrew Roberts is a historian and broadcaster. His newest book, *George III: The Life and Reign of Britain's Most Misunderstood Monarch*, comes out from Penguin on 7 October. He will also be discussing it on our podcast. historyextra.com/podcast



Legal battle

A 14th-century illustration shows two bishops watching men fight to the death in a trial by combat. Duels were used to resolve judicial matters, putting the verdict to God's judgment



In 1386, **two Frenchmen fought a duel** in a field outside Paris, each seeking to bury his **blade in the other's body**. One combatant had been accused of raping the other's wife, a charge he denied vehemently. After an initial verdict of innocence was returned, the accuser demanded a **trial by combat**. The judgment was now God's alone...

...who would be chosen to die?

BY HANNAH SKODA

Eye of the storm
Jodie Comer plays Marguerite de Carrouges in the upcoming film *The Last Duel*, which tells the story of how a rape allegation in 14th-century France culminated in trial by combat

In the winter of 1386, a French noblewoman by the name of Marguerite de Carrouges found herself at the centre of a criminal case that electrified Paris, captivated the king and culminated in blood being spilled before an enormous crowd in a field just outside the French capital.

Earlier that year, Marguerite's husband, the knight Jean de Carrouges, had accused his former friend Jacques le Gris of raping Marguerite. After failing to get justice at the court of the Count of Alençon in Normandy, Jean beseeched the king for justice. He made a formal process of "appeal" or challenge against Jacques le Gris and requested the right to prove the justice of his cause in combat. This was the famous "trial by combat", sometimes known as a judicial battle.

After an investigation, the parlement (the French sovereign appeal court) granted this right to de Carrouges, and he met le Gris in specially constructed lists, a space for tournaments, at Saint-Martin-des-Champs just outside Paris. The crowd was huge, and included King Charles VI himself. De Carrouges and le Gris took special oaths before the king, including a promise that they didn't have an unfair or magical advantage. Each man "placed his sole reliance on the justice of his cause, his body, his horse, and his arms".

The fight itself was brutal. The two men charged at one another with their lances, butchered each other's war-horses and took to the ground in bitter and bloody combat. They were quite literally fighting for their lives. If de Carrouges won, he would apparently prove the justice of his cause, and le Gris would be found guilty and hanged. But if de Carrouges lost, le Gris' protestations of innocence would be proven true, and de Carrouges would be guilty of perjury, a capital offence.

But the eyes of the crowd were not only on the two men, but on Marguerite herself, the beautiful survivor at the centre of the matter. The story is told in a wonderful book, *The Last Duel*, by Eric Jager, and has now been re-imagined in

a big-budget Hollywood film, starring Jodie Comer, Matt Damon and Adam Driver. [Spoiler alert: the climax of the duel is revealed in the final two paragraphs of this feature].

Jager describes Marguerite as the "cause" of the trial by combat and the whole affair. But, of course, she wasn't: the rapist caused the whole unhappy saga. Marguerite stands out in the historical record for her steadfastness and immense courage. If her husband lost the trial by combat, Marguerite would also be found guilty of perjury. Her grisly fate? To be burned alive.

The combat itself, with its elaborate ritual and public spectacle, was of course a magnificent opportunity for de Carrouges to avenge himself publicly and restore his honour and that of his wife. The ethos driving this event was one of chivalric and noble honour and pride. What's more, le Gris was an enemy of de Carrouges – the hatred between the two was palpable.

But trial by combat was also a specific legal mechanism. It had a long history, a particular logic, and had always generated a good deal of scepticism. This was not the same as the chivalric duel, rather it was a judicial process.

Trial by combat was a form of ordeal – the idea was that the case would be decided by *judicium Dei*, the judgment of God. Jean de Carrouges was not satisfied with the initial court verdict, and was requesting the opportunity to put the case before God. In this sense, trial by combat was related to other forms of medieval trial by ordeal: by water, by fire, by hot iron and so on. Rather than earthly proof, God would apparently make manifest innocence and guilt by protecting the innocent.

David and Goliath

Trial by combat has ancient origins. Indeed, medieval people often referred to the story of David and Goliath, in which God worked a miracle and the righteousness of David's cause was proven by his incredible victory over the giant.

In medieval Europe, trial by combat resurfaced in Germanic law. The first reference comes in a Burgundian decree by King Gundobad in AD 502. This code explained that most judgments were to be made following an oath by the accused party, but that "if the party to whom the oath has been offered does not wish to receive it, but says that his adversary's pledge of truth can be proven by arms, and the other party will not give up, let permission for combat not be denied".

The practice spread fairly widely from this



Burgundian centre. It is most well known as a judicial resort in France, and seems to have come to Britain with the Norman conquest. Most of these trials date from the mid-11th to mid-14th centuries.

Trial by combat could be used for both civil and criminal cases: property disputes could be resolved this way, as well as heinous crimes of homicide, arson and rape.

Who fought in these combats? The most famous examples involve prominent noblemen. However, combats were theoretically a possibility for anyone: townsmen, peasants, Jews, women. What really concerned authorities was that there should not be an unfair advantage. Women generally resorted to appointing a champion to represent them: in 1280, one Jeanne de la Valette accused two knights of arson, and appointed a champion to fight for her.

Labourers would not be pitted against a well-armed nobleman. The French legist Philippe de Beaumanoir explained that a knight could not accuse and challenge a commoner and then fight in full armour. "His dignity is reduced in that case to the same kind of armour as the defending party has by right," said de Beaumanoir, "and it would be a very cruel thing if the gentleman

appealed against a commoner and he had the advantage of a horse and armour."

Accused and castrated

From the early days of judicial combat, contemporaries seem to have been well aware that mistakes could happen. In AD 724, the Lombard king Liutprand issued a decree that those defeated in judicial combat, but later found innocent, should receive back the compensation money they had paid to the victim.

What happened if both parties died? This was not uncommon, and threw the whole process into doubt. Some surviving miracle stories also demonstrate an awareness that trial by combat did not always yield the correct result. In 1208, Saint William of York apparently worked a miracle to restore the eyes and testicles of a man who had been unjustly accused, and castrated and blinded during his trial by combat.

Part of the anxiety about judicial combat came from a growing rationalisation. The English legist Ranulph de Glanville wrote around 1190 that "the legal institution [of trial by jury] is based above all on equity. Justice, which is seldom arrived at by battle even after many and long delays, is more easily and quickly attained by its use."

Blood sport

A 1540s illustration of the trial by combat between Marshal Wilhelm von Dornsborg and Theodor Haschenacker in 1409. Duels were public spectacles drawing crowds thirsty for grisly entertainment

Saint William of York apparently worked a miracle to restore the eyes and testicles of a man who had been unjustly accused



Fight to the death

A 15th-century illumination of the de Carrouges and le Gris duel, watched by Marguerite (in a carriage) and King Charles VI. In reality, no one was decapitated in the fighting

and had him carry her across a bog on her shoulders. She was then able to swear on holy relics that she had never had any man between her legs except Tristan. For this kind of story to work and to entertain, audiences must have felt a degree of scepticism about the whole idea of *judicium Dei*.

The Renart stories, wildly popular throughout the later Middle Ages, told of a wicked little fox who played vicious pranks on all his friends, thieving, brutalising and even raping the wife of his best friend. In one story, he is challenged to a trial by combat by this very friend, Isengrin the Wolf. The fight is bitter, and Renart is castrated and blinded, but springs back to life with a flourish to continue his vile exploits. Audiences here, from court to monastery, were able to laugh at the inconclusiveness of the duel.

Half-hearted action

Anxiety about judicial combat produced a series of decrees limiting the practice. Louis VII of France (reigned 1137–80), and his successors Louis VIII and Philip Augustus, all issued edicts restricting the use of duels, particularly with regard to men who wanted to prove their free status. In 1258, Louis IX, a king responsible for numerous judicial reforms, banned judicial combat altogether.

However, these many attempts to limit judicial combat were half-hearted, to say the least. Philip Augustus actively issued charters to some towns permitting duels, and even after Louis IX's unequivocal edict, the practice continued in France. Nobles in particular saw the practice as their right and fought hard to restore it. Then, in 1307, Philip IV of France restored trial by combat for criminal cases.

The affair between Jean le Carrouges and Jacques le Gris is dramatically called “the last duel” in both book and film, but it wasn't. In 1409, a French decree ordered the end of judicial duels unless allowed by the parlement of Paris itself, and they did continue, although less frequently, until the 1580s.

It is tempting to see the medieval trial by combat as a prime example of our predecessors' irrationality and gullibility. But there were a distinctive set of rationales at work here. Some cases simply cannot be proven one way or another. In a society that believed in

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As legal mechanisms became ever more sophisticated, judicial combat came to look out of place

As legal mechanisms became ever more sophisticated and political power more institutionalised, judicial combat came to look increasingly out of place, not least because it potentially undermined royal authority.

The church was also increasingly concerned about the implications of trial by combat. Already in the ninth century, Pope Nicholas I had worried that these trials essentially “tempted God”, which was blasphemous. Churchmen at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 – a key moment in the growing legalisation of the institutional church – expressed grave concerns about the ordeal, and the church drew back from overseeing the ritual of ordeals. Some of this concern came from a growing legalisation; some of it from sophisticated theological arguments put forward by figures like Peter the Chanter at the University of Paris.

These kinds of anxieties were expressed more amusingly, but equally importantly, in literature. The 12th-century story of Tristan and Isolde demolished the whole logic of the ordeal, albeit not judicial combat precisely. Isolde, needing to demonstrate that she was not an adulteress, dressed Tristan up as a leper



Animal tales A late 13th-century illustration from a collection of Renart the fox fables, *Renart le Nouvel*. The deceitful fox is challenged to trial by combat by his nemesis, a wolf

the power of God over all things, it was surely not unreasonable to put intractable cases to divine judgment. Indeed, in such a religious environment, this was perhaps more logical than belief in the power of *human* judgment.

More than this, judicial combat could be a useful way for royal power to distance itself from difficult cases, to rid itself of pugnacious undesirables and to avoid taking sides when it was politically dangerous to do so. For the participants, the stakes were appallingly high, but this was a way to enact revenge and satisfy honour in the most public way possible. And for the public, this was a spectacle of the most impressive and terrifying kind.

Jean de Carrouges and Jacques le Gris fought out their case before a vast crowd and a fascinated King Charles VI. The battle was drawn-out, bloody and spectacular. It finished when de Carrouges pulled back the visor of le Gris and fatally stabbed him. Le Gris' body was dragged from the blood-soaked field and hanged on a gibbet.

De Carrouges was rewarded many times for his courage, vindicating the righteousness of his cause. As for his wife, Marguerite, she stood firm, having risked her reputation and her life in order to speak out and to speak the truth. **H**

Hannah Skoda is a fellow in medieval history at the University of Oxford. Her books include *Medieval Violence* (OUP, 2013). She has written about violence against women in the Middle Ages for our website: historyextra.com/last-duel-violence

WATCH

The Last Duel is expected to arrive in UK cinemas on 15 October 2021

CASES IN THE COMBAT COURTROOM

Hannah Skoda delves into the historical files for three judicial duels that didn't go to plan

1 Make a meal of it

In 1386, two noblemen, Gérard de Mortagne and Gilles, Lord of Chin and Busignies, took to the lists for a trial by combat at Nancy in front of Jean I, the Duke of Lorraine. The cause of the duel is unknown, but it was fought in a deeply fractured political context. The combat did not proceed as expected. Their seconds and the duke's men pulled the combatants apart, and the duke invited them to dinner, where his daughter, Isabelle, asked them: "For her honour and that of the other ladies there present... to submit their dispute... to the ruling of my lord the duke."

2 A sorry affair

Historian and bishop Gregory of Tours recounted a trial by combat in AD 590 between the Burgundian royal chamberlain Chundo, and one of the king's foresters. The former had been accused of illegally killing an animal. Chundo sent his nephew as his champion, but he was killed and

Chundo tied to a stake and stoned to death. Before dying, the nephew had managed to fatally injure the forester, so at the end of the sorry affair, all three men involved were dead. The judgment of God was unclear.

3 Hand-to-hand combat

In England in 1455, accused thief Thomas Whitehorn tried to buy time by accusing others. In legal terms, he became an "approver". One of the men he named, James Fisher, challenged him to combat. They were to fight with three-foot-long batons, topped with iron in the shape of a ram's horn. These weapons broke in the duel and they fought it out with their hands. Fisher bit Whitehorn's nose and jabbed his thumb in his eye until Whitehorn admitted defeat and was hanged. Fisher became a hermit. A sceptical chronicler described the outcome as "more by happenchance than by strength".

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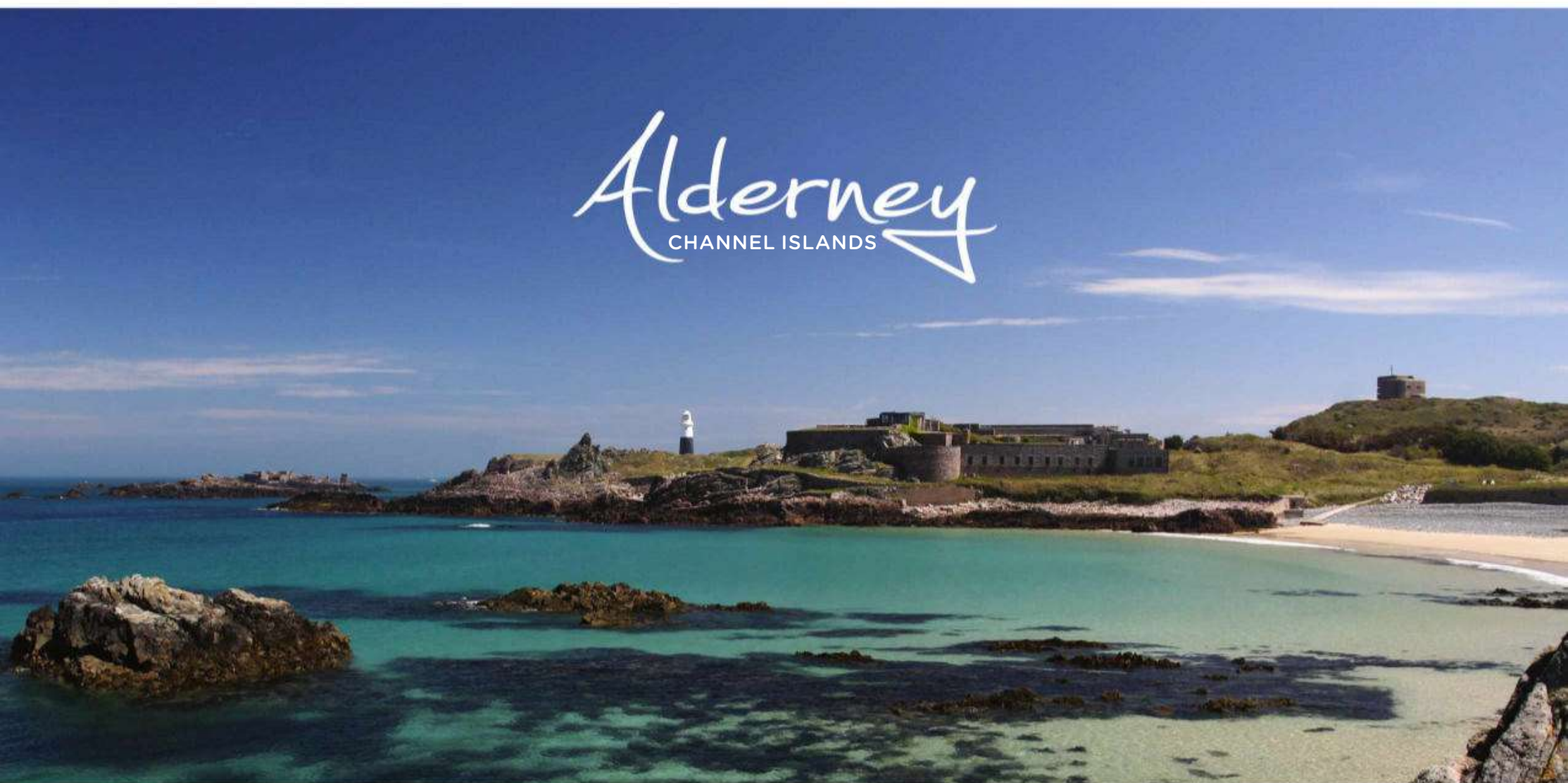


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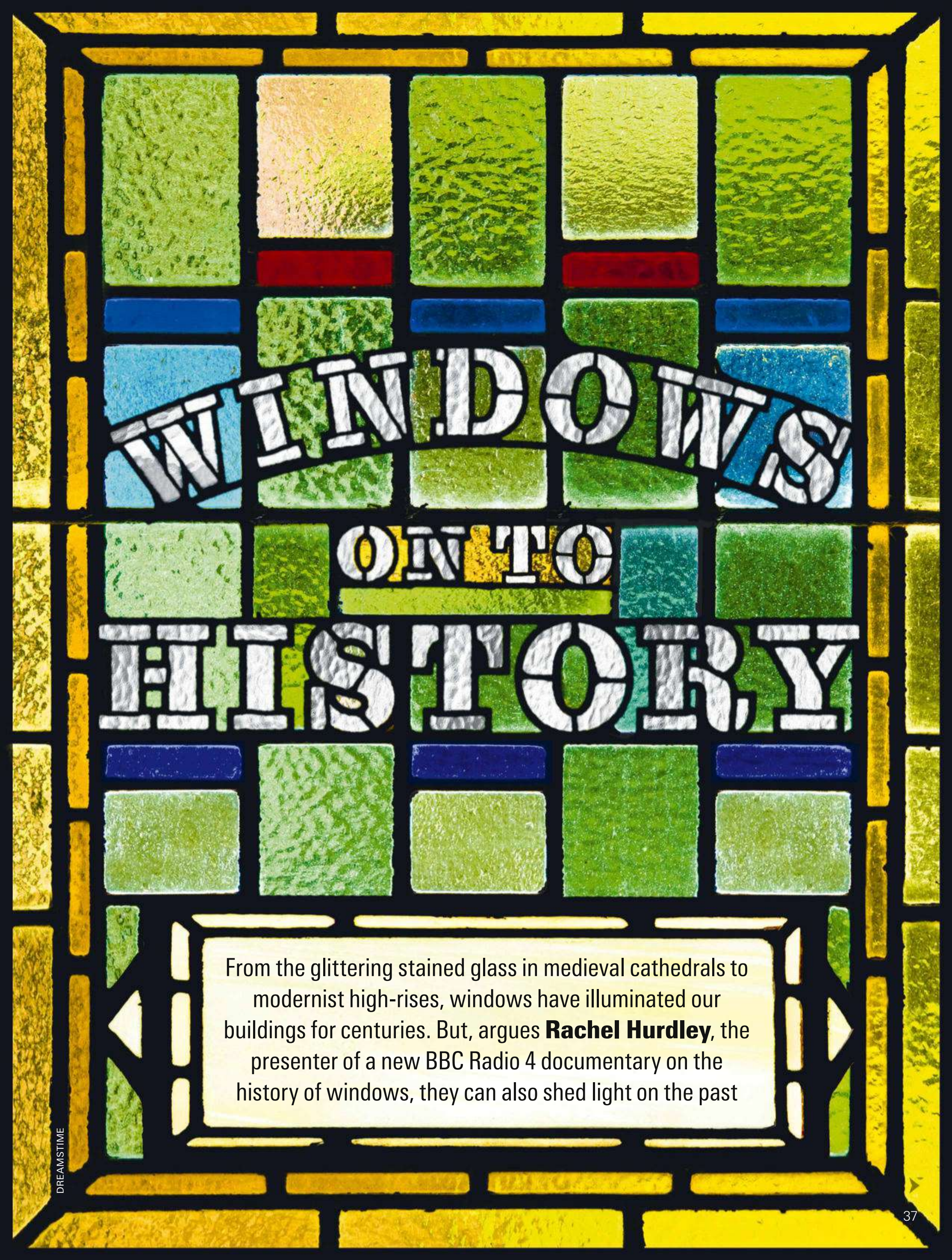
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WINDOWS ONTO HISTORY

From the glittering stained glass in medieval cathedrals to modernist high-rises, windows have illuminated our buildings for centuries. But, argues **Rachel Hurdley**, the presenter of a new BBC Radio 4 documentary on the history of windows, they can also shed light on the past

Windows are too often treated as merely providers of light, ventilation and views. But there is little more terrifying than a dark window with an unknown face peering in. And there are few more useful places for covert entrances and exits, as prime minister Stanley Baldwin found in December 1936. Pursued by the press, he finally crept into Buckingham Palace through a back window, to talk with King Edward VIII about his forthcoming abdication announcement.

“The history of architecture is also the history of windows,” pronounced Le Corbusier, a pioneer of modernist architecture. As we shall see through the following seven examples, the history of windows is also the history of war, politics, technology, aesthetics and morality. Not simply “the eyes of the house”, windows open up connections between architecture and socio-cultural change, from international conflict to the welfare state.



A 1932 children's illustration of a frightened boy lying in bed. “There is little more terrifying than a dark window with an unknown face peering in,” says Rachel Hurdley

1 On the defensive

To see how windows changed history, look no further than Chepstow Castle. One of the first stone castles in Britain, it was built from 1067, a reward from William the Conqueror to his follower, William Fitz Osbern. Its role as a stronghold on the Welsh banks of the Wye was vital, a symbol of the conquering Normans and a defence against the Welsh.

Its fortifications remained poor until around 1190, when William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, strengthened them. He introduced the arrow slits – which, as openings in the walls that allow those inside to look out, and of course fire arrows through, can be regarded as fitting windows for castle towers. The Chepstow Castle arrow slits are some of the earliest in medieval conflict architecture.

These adaptable forms of defence had somehow been forgotten for centuries. Although they may have been the Egyptians' invention more than 4,000 years ago, historian Polybius claimed that Archimedes of ancient Greece had invented them in the third century BC, during the siege of Syracuse.

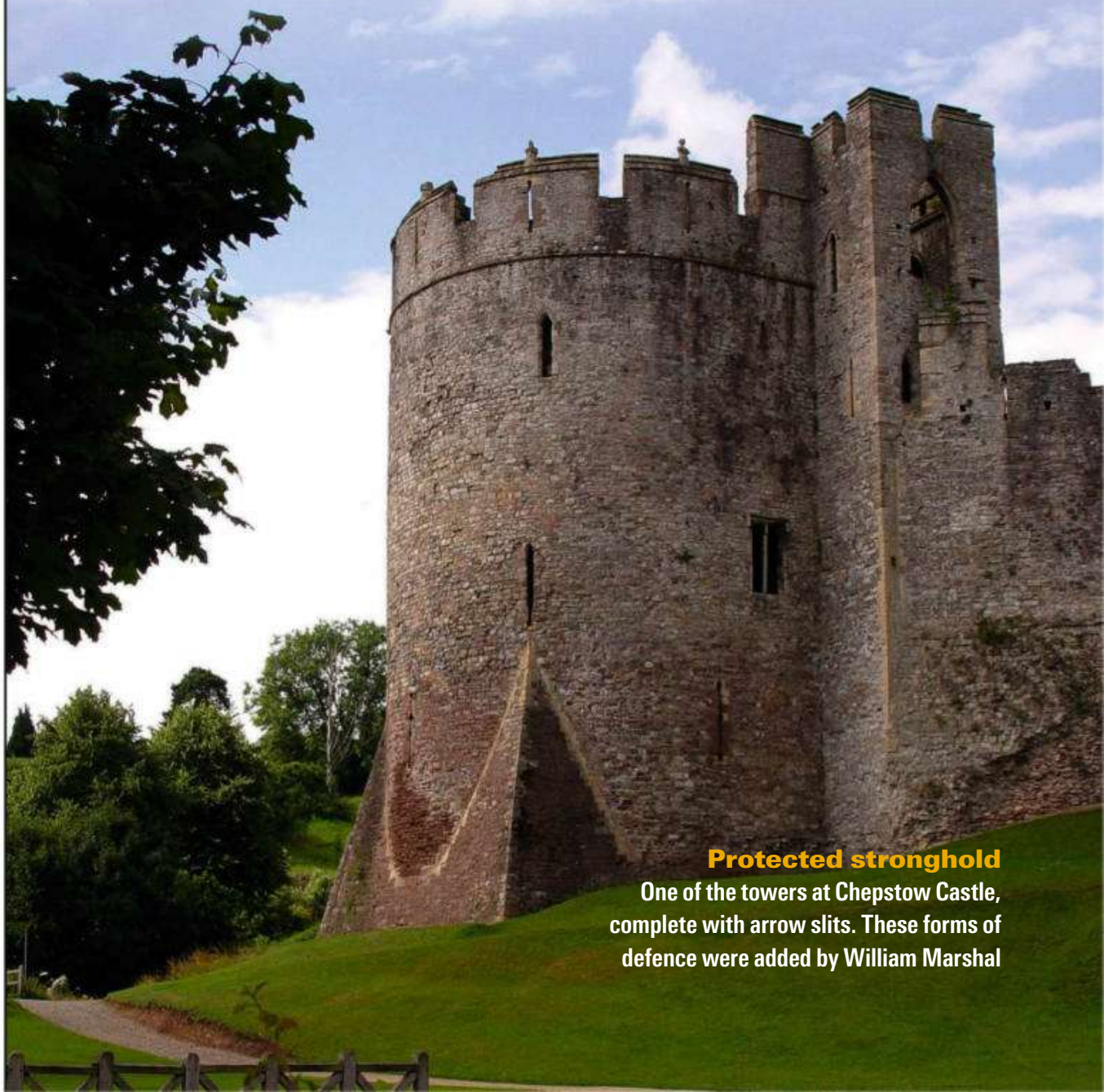
Chepstow's arrow slits vary in height, width and shape. Long straight slits

Chepstow Castle's arrow slits were some of the earliest in medieval conflict architecture

complemented the long bow, while those with short horizontal slits across them also suited the crossbow. The opening (or embrasure) widened within, giving bowmen an extended, but protected, field of view. These slits were seen as innovative at the time and well-designed for their purpose, since the attacker was unable to shoot an arrow through the narrow slit, and the defender had unlimited time to observe and take aim.

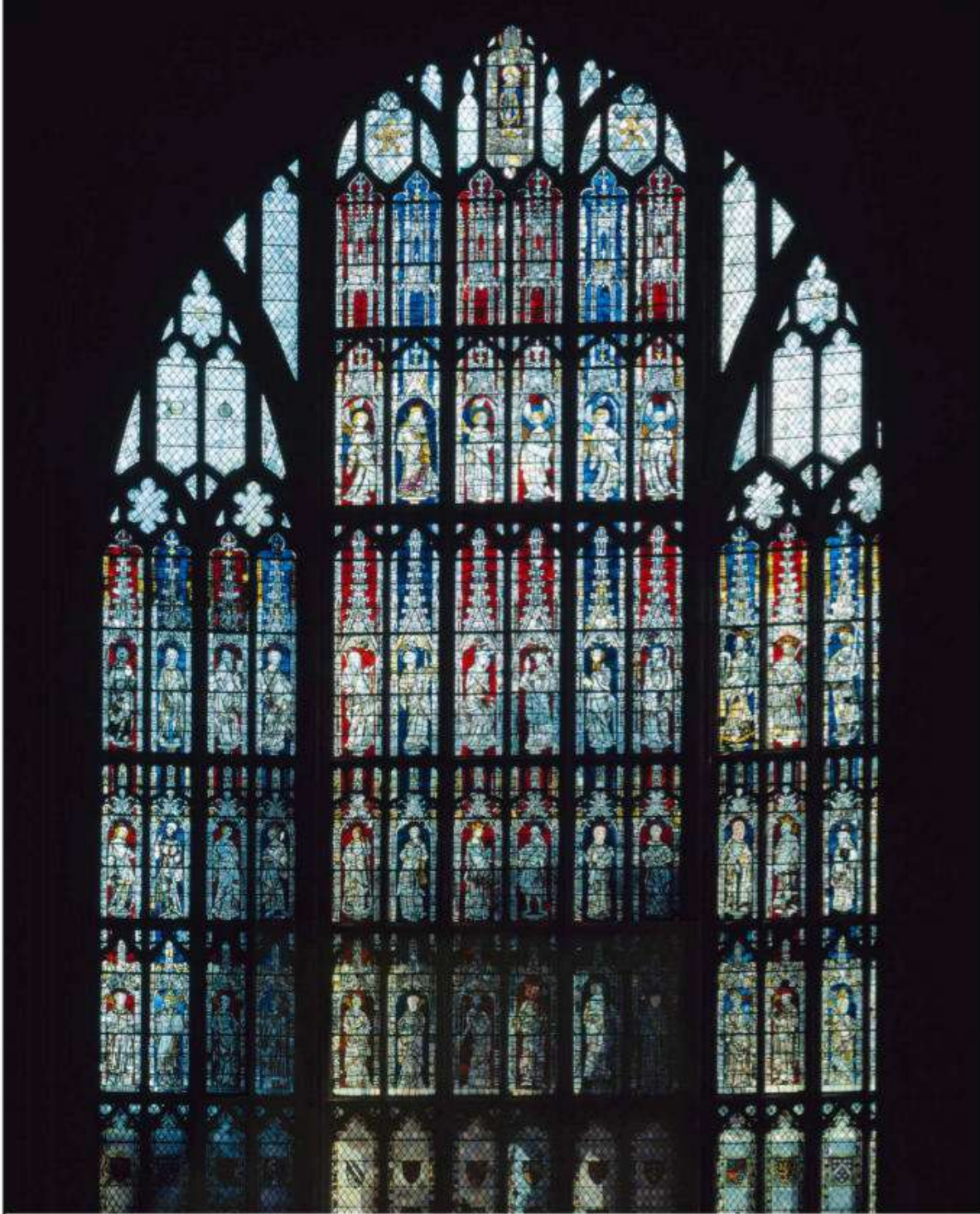
Defence was a priority, so the arrow slits were also aimed at the outer bailey, within the castle's walls.

In later medieval times, the addition of an elegant Great Hall, with richly decorated windows overlooking the Wye, gave good light for comfortable reading on cushioned seats.



Protected stronghold

One of the towers at Chepstow Castle, complete with arrow slits. These forms of defence were added by William Marshal



Glorious view The great east window at Gloucester Cathedral is the size of a tennis court. As a symbol of both secular and sacred authority, it mesmerised medieval pilgrims

2 Basking in heavenly light

The great east window at Gloucester Cathedral is said to have been the largest in the world when it was installed, in the 1350s. When the sun shone through this tennis court-sized structure, its luminous colours, symbolising the divine light of heaven, stunned pilgrims approaching Edward II's tomb.

The window encompasses the English medieval world view of a hierarchical society, as the layers ascend from noblemen's shields to clergymen and kings. Above these are the saints, apostles and angels, with the Virgin Mary and Christ as the centrepiece. As a symbol of secular and sacred authority, it would have awed a largely illiterate society, but perhaps as impressive was its craftsmanship and technology.

Created from thousands of pieces of glass set in lead, the window is a fine example of French Abbot Suger's conception of stained glass representing "heavenly light" in religious architecture. Various metal oxides and other ingredients such as urine

produced the richly coloured glass. Such a huge window required not only Gothic building technology, but also complex stone tracery to support it.

Not only does the hierarchy of power ascend to God, but it also descends to the royal heraldry below, its meaning clear in the alternative name of the Cr cy Window. Worshippers walking down the nave would have seen the lower layer of emblems belonging to noblemen who had fought in the Cr cy campaign, when English troops had stormed to victory over France in 1346. This great victory, viewed as a sign of divine favour, was an ideal opportunity to assert the authority of the crown under Edward III following Edward II's unstable reign.

The window's symbolism, affirming the king's divine right and England's power, would not have been lost on the pilgrims to Edward II's tomb. Medieval cosmology might have centred on religious belief, but this was intertwined with the national political consciousness.

3 The ultimate status symbol

Bess of Hardwick, Countess of Shrewsbury, who was surpassed only in wealth by Queen Elizabeth herself, built Hardwick Hall in the 1590s. Planned by Robert Smythson, who was renowned as the first English architect, the Hall was designed to impress visitors with Bess's affluence and power. Increasing in height with each storey, the windows were made possible only by incorporating the fireplaces into the walls – at the time, fireplaces and chimneys protruded externally, taking up space. Not content with showing her wealth through the display of so much expensive glass, Bess established a glassworks to produce it.

The visitor, suitably overawed by the myriad panes, glittering like diamonds, in the huge windows of the Hall's facade – Hardwick was described as "more window than wall" – would then be directed up three flights of stairs to the glory of the Great High Chamber. Their breathless ascent would be followed by breathtaking views over Bess's land, stretching as far as the eye could see. They would be left in no doubt who was in charge: a woman who was a powerful property owner. Topped by her initials in stone, "ES", Hardwick Hall shows how windows stamped authority on the landscape and domestic interior.



Hardwick Hall's glorious glass facade was built on the orders of Bess of Hardwick, to show off her exorbitant riches



On the warpath The defenestration of Prague, which saw two imperial regents thrown out of a window by a Protestant mob, triggered political turmoil and conflict across Europe

4 Thrown from power

The execution of King Charles I has its origins, at least partially, in a tale of people being pushed out of a window. In 1618, a Bohemian Protestant mob threw two imperial regents out of a window at Prague (Hradčany) Castle. The victims, who were Catholic and seen as enemies of the Protestant estates, were saved by a convenient dung heap, but the event exacerbated tensions with the Catholic Habsburgs. As both sides gathered their forces, the defenestration proved to be a catalyst for the Thirty Years' War, which led to 8 million deaths.

While that conflict ravaged Europe, James I of England, who cast himself as "Rex Pacificus" (King of Peace), was dealing with rising tensions in his own country. He upset the virulently anti-Catholic parliament by failing to support his daughter Elizabeth and Protestant son-in-law, Frederick, when they were ousted as king and queen of

Bohemia by Catholic troops. Even worse, in an attempt at "balance", James arranged the marriage of his son, the future Charles I, to the French Catholic princess Henrietta Maria, even allowing her and other Catholics to continue their religious practices.

James's conduct in the Thirty Years' War fractured the relationship between the monarchy and parliament. The damage sowed the seeds of the Civil War, and Charles I losing his head.

Charles I's execution finds its origins in a tale of two men being pushed out of a window

5 Lessons in morality

William Holman Hunt designed *The Awakening Conscience* (1853) as a pair for his religious work, *The Light of the World*. Whereas the earlier painting centres on a door, symbolising the human heart at which Christ is knocking, *The Awakening Conscience* shows a window (reflected in a mirror), representing the light of salvation, towards which a "fallen woman" is turning.

The woman, without a wedding ring, is embraced by her lover in a vulgarly furnished room. Contemporaries would have read the symbols of the cat toying with a wounded bird, the tangled web of yarn and the man's cast-off glove as rich in meaning. However, this painting, unlike the conventional Victorian trope of the "fallen woman" as a lost soul, is an unusual image of Christian charity.

Prompted by her lover playing 'Oft in the Silly Night' – a nostalgic song evoking memories of a happy past, the sheet music for which is visible on the piano – the woman looks to move towards the window and the sunlit promise of salvation. Sadly, most Victorian viewers missed this message, revelling instead in the fact that the model was Hunt's teen mistress, an uneducated former barmaid.

GETTY IMAGES



Looking to the light A "fallen woman" is turning to salvation, represented by a window, in William Holman Hunt's 1853 painting

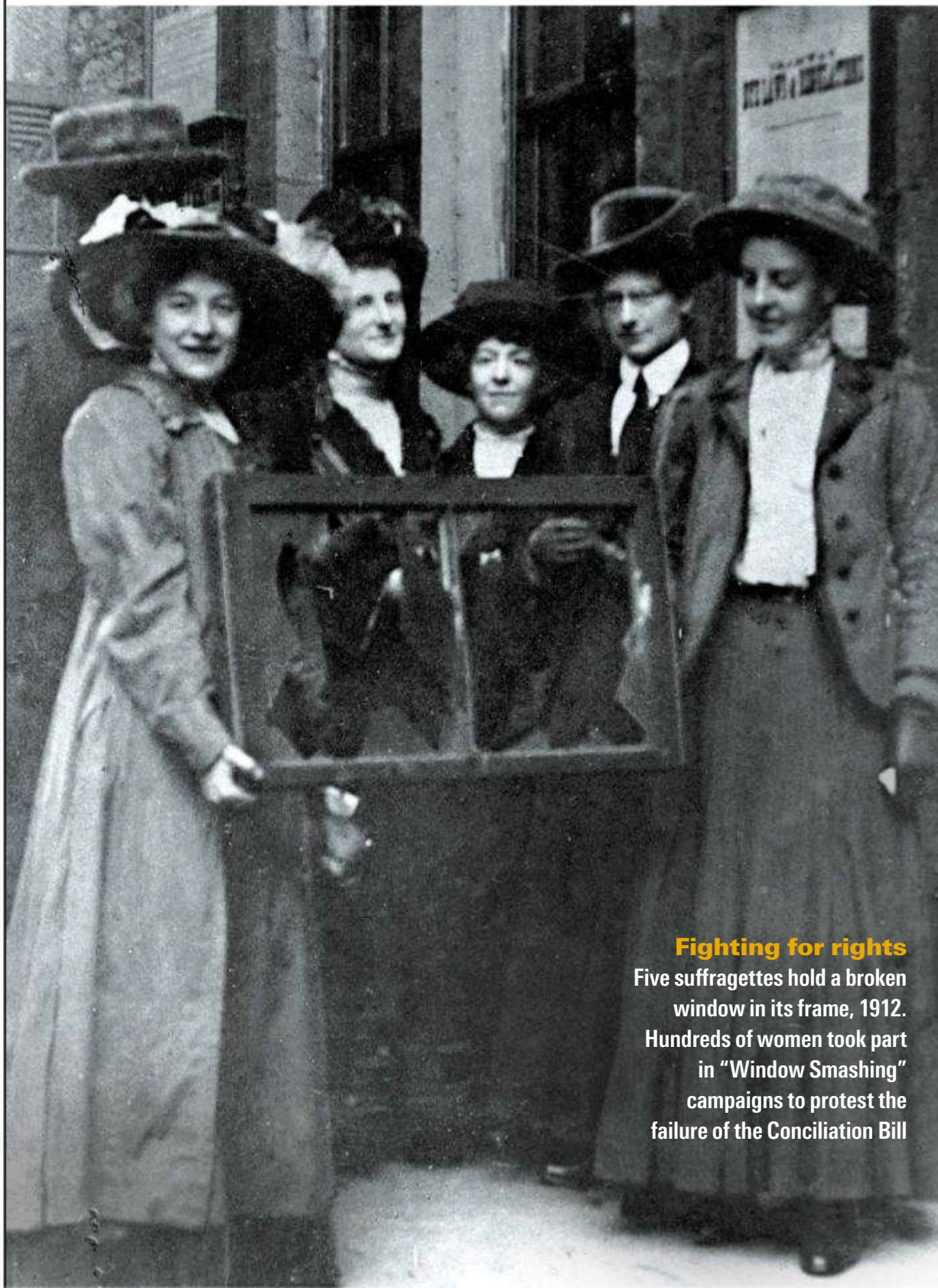
6 Breaking the glass window

On or about 22 November 1910, my own great-grandmother Charlotte Shaw politely asked a policeman where the office of cabinet minister John Burns was. She then took a brick from her muff and hurled it at the minister's window. Charlotte was an early adopter of the suffragettes' "Window Smashing" campaigns. Triggered by the failure of the Conciliation Bill, which would have given some 1 million women the vote, Charlotte and hundreds of others embarked on these campaigns of destruction, using hammers and bricks often inscribed with motifs such as "Better broken windows than broken promises".

Shortly before her arrest for "wilful damage", Charlotte had appeared in Bow Street Police Court for

"obstructing the police in the execution of their duty". A London newspaper gleefully reported that they were denied their "martyrdom" since, despite bringing luggage for a stay in prison, all the women were released. The home secretary had declined to offer any evidence against them.

Untroubled by this move, Charlotte threw the brick, receiving a month in Holloway. She was buoyed by a telegram her sister Mabel Capper, also a suffragette, received in the courtroom: "Bravo Victory nearer than ever. Anything needed write home. Best wishes to you and Auntie Char. Mother Father Jack Willie Capper. Manchester." And their victory finally came in 1928, when women were given equal franchise to men.



Fighting for rights
Five suffragettes hold a broken window in its frame, 1912. Hundreds of women took part in "Window Smashing" campaigns to protest the failure of the Conciliation Bill



Bleak fate High-rise flats in Glasgow, c1960. These modernist buildings with wide windows and balconies were demolished four decades later

7 Modernism in ruins

In 1993 Hutchesontown C, a high-rise housing estate in Glasgow, was finally demolished by wrecking crews. This was a grim end to the damp, infested ruin that had been Basil Spence's modernist vision: "On Tuesdays, when the washing's out, it'll be like a great ship in full sail."

Spence was inspired by Le Corbusier's 1952 "Unité d'Habitation" in Marseilles – described as "streets in the sky", these huge blocks of maisonettes featured wide windows and large balconies – and designed what came to be known as "Colditz" along similar lines.

But there was a dark side to this modernist style. Grouping tall buildings together caused extremely high winds to whip around the flats, blowing washing away and damaging windows and doors. Damp was also a persistent issue, partly because such a complex and large building needed constant maintenance, which the city council could not afford. The mass-produced Brutalist housing became associated with deprivation and ill-health – needless to say, it was deeply unpopular with the local people. Spence's 1950s dream of "gardens in the sky" turned to crumbling concrete. **H**

Rachel Hurdley is a research fellow in cultural sociology at Cardiff University, and she also presented *The Hidden History of the Window*, which is available on BBC Sounds



Check, check and *check again*

Throughout history, people have paid the price for not checking beforehand. **FSCS** can help you avoid the same mistake with your money

Since time immemorial, there's always been value in taking due care and attention before launching into any given endeavour. After all, history is littered with examples of monarchs, generals, explorers, architects and more coming unstuck after leaving too many stones unturned.

But thanks to the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS), the simple act of checking can help you keep your pensions and investments protected from any unforeseen financial mishaps. Read on to find out how.

Legendary blunders

The Leaning Tower of Pisa must surely be history's greatest lasting example of a failure to check details.

Construction began in 1173 and it was doomed from the start – despite plans for the tower to be 56 metres tall, the foundations were initially only three metres deep.

To add insult to injury, they were built on unstable soil, which combined with the existing architectural missteps made the sinking inevitable. The tower quickly began to lean, and after a war-induced pause, construction began again in 1272, and almost every attempt to correct it only served to worsen the tilt. It wasn't until 2001 that the tower was fully stabilised, reducing the pitch to 3.97 degrees.



And how different might the world now be if Christopher Columbus hadn't made the mistake of attempting to sail west from Europe to Asia back in 1492? Well, we wouldn't be playing the West Indies in cricket for a start! Due to Columbus's fundamental navigational mistakes, what he assumed to be Asia when he made landfall turned out to be the Caribbean.

Look after your money

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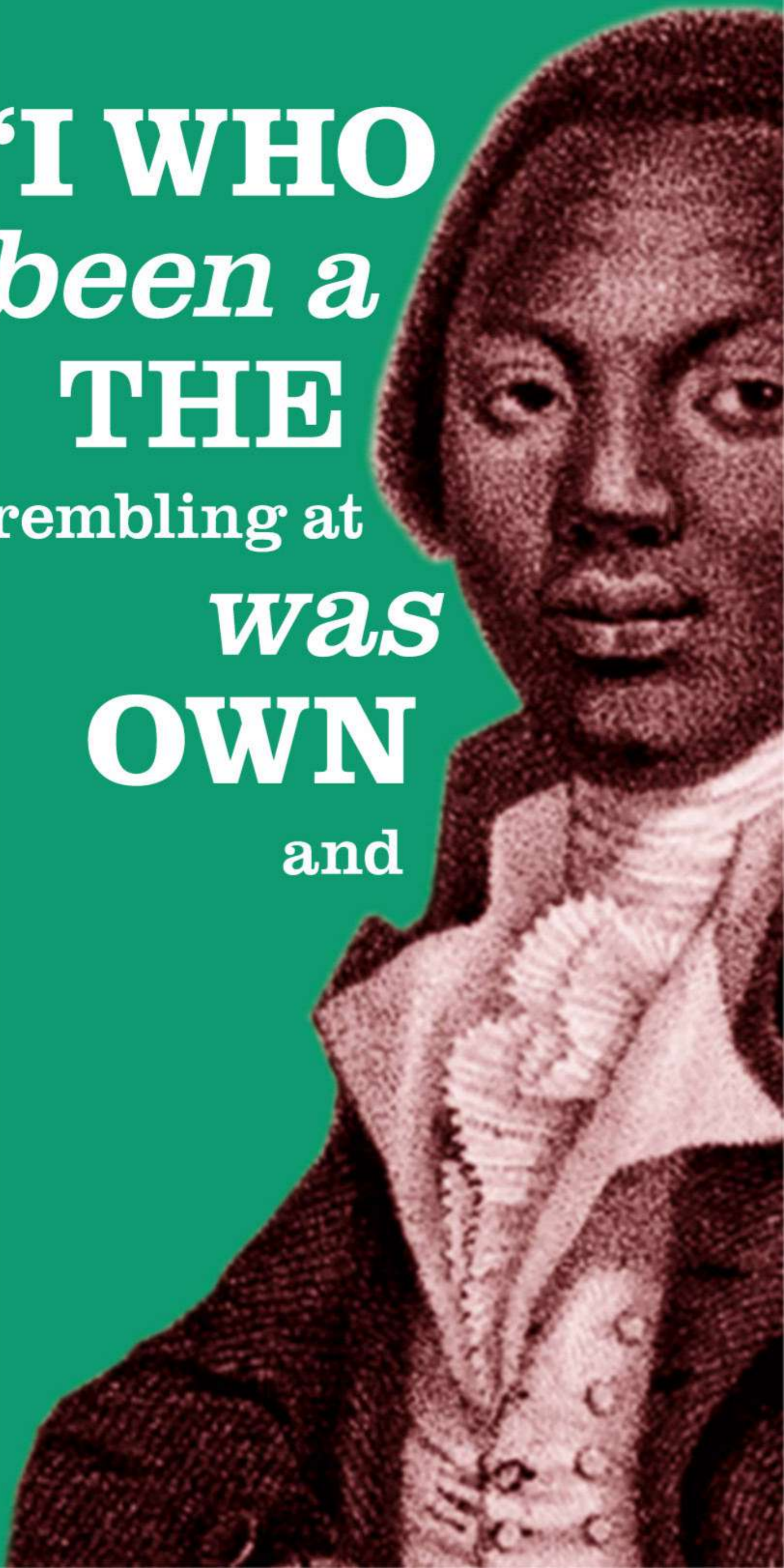
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“I WHO
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Champion of the cause

A portrait of Olaudah Equiano from his autobiography, 1789. Equiano was a huge asset to the abolition movement, speaking against slavery “with the authority of a man who had escaped its clutches and witnessed its horrors”



HAD
slave in
MORNING,
the will of another,
become my
MASTER,
completely
FREE”

Olaudah Equiano’s dramatic biography of his perilous journey from slavery to freedom added a powerful black voice to the burgeoning abolition movement. **David Olusoga** reflects on his extraordinary story

The history of black people in Britain during the 18th century is a series of unknowns. We don't know the size of the black "community", or even if black Georgians formed discrete communities. We only have fleeting glimpses as to how they interacted with one another and are unsure what proportion of them were free and what proportion lived in forms of unfreedom. While some were clearly servants, others were undoubtedly enslaved. Instead of detail, we have passing references which hint at lives that can never be better understood.

What makes this all the more frustrating is that black Georgians themselves, despite these gaps in the historical record, are literally visible to us. They appear in hundreds of portraits, as servants, footmen, maids and stable-boys. Usually pushed up against the picture frames, they were painted not as individuals but as fashionable accessories, the exotic property of the main sitters, their masters and mistresses. Only a handful of black Georgians were the subjects of their own portraits.

Yet despite this mountain of unknowns and frustrations, there are a tiny number of black Georgians who emerge from the historical record, not as fleeting apparitions, but fully formed characters. Those few were men and women who left behind their own words, in the form of letters, memoirs and biographies. The most significant of those rare texts was written by the most famous black person to appear in Britain of the late 18th century – Olaudah Equiano.

Escaping enslavement

Although the exact circumstances of his birth are the subject of a historical controversy, which will be discussed in more detail later in the feature, what is certain is that Equiano experienced slavery and was able to escape from it. In 1789, having been a free-man for 23 years he published his autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself*.

In the early chapters Equiano describes his childhood in Africa and how it was brought to a sudden end when he and his sister were abducted by African slave traders. Marched to the coast they were separated, which devastated Equiano: "It was in vain that we besought them not to part us; she was torn from me, and immediately carried away,

while I was left in a state of distraction not to be described. I cried and grieved continually; and for several days I did not eat any thing but what they forced into my mouth." He was then shipped across the Atlantic on a British slave ship to Barbados. From there he went to Virginia and was sold to a tobacco planter, who in turn sold him on to Michael Pascal, a British naval captain.

Although the legal property of Michael Pascal, Equiano experienced slavery in a form very different to that of most enslaved Africans. Escaping the brutal life of sugar fields he instead was employed on board

ships, working for Pascal while travelling across the British empire of the mid-18th century. These travels took him to England and into battle, serving in the Royal Navy, under Pascal, during the Seven Years' War.

In 1762 Equiano was sold again, and by 1763 he was the property of Robert King, a Quaker merchant with interests in Monserrat. Again Equiano was employed at sea. In this stage of his life he was however permitted a life-changing liberty.

Equiano was allowed to trade whatever goods he was able to acquire and keep the profits.

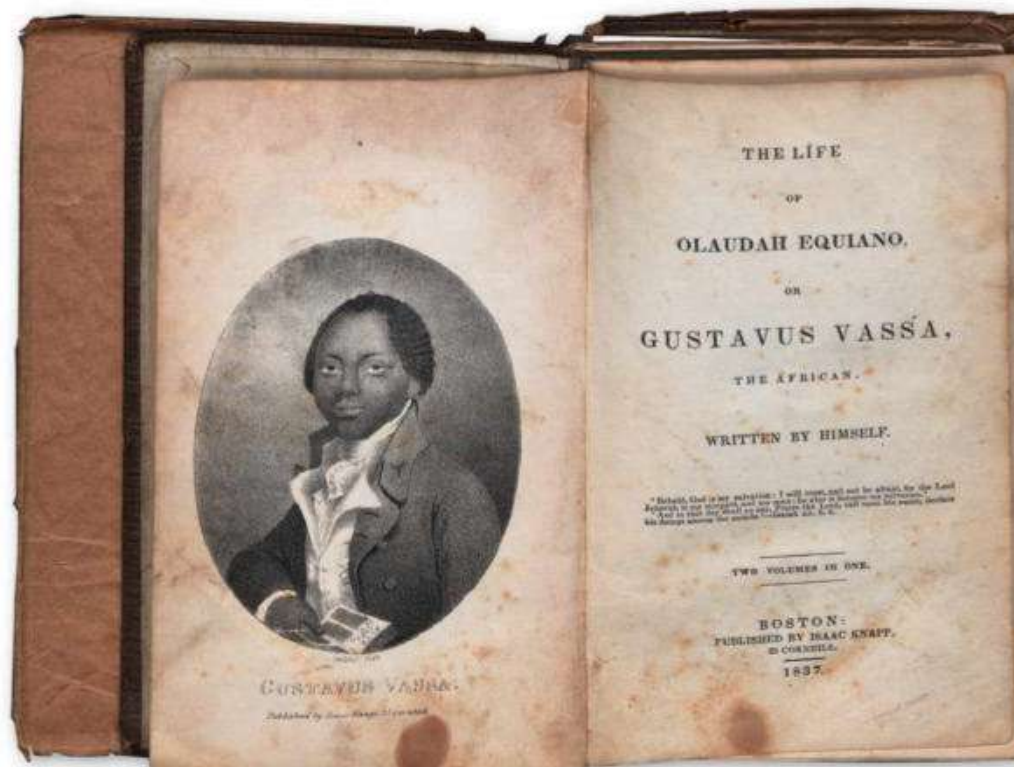
Over the next three years he slowly accumulated a growing stash that he carefully used to buy goods in one part of the empire that could be sold at a profit in another. Astonishingly, and despite various moments in which he was swindled, robbed and short-changed, he was able to gather together the sum of £40, the price Robert King had set for the purchase of his freedom.

In 1766 King was persuaded to allow Equiano to buy his manumission from slavery. Describing the moment he secured his freedom, Equiano said: "I who had been a slave in the morning, trembling at the will of another, was become my own master, and completely free. I thought this was the happiest day I had ever experienced."

As a freeman Equiano continued to work as a sailor and by 1767 had settled in London, returning to sea when financial circumstances dictated. By the early 1770s he was well established in London, becoming a leading black figure in the city, able to use his connections to campaign for the rights of other black Londoners. This was at a time when the legality of slavery in England and Scotland was being contested, and men and women brought to Britain as human property were being kidnapped on the streets of London and other cities and forcibly shipped back to the plantations.

In 1783 Equiano began a campaign to draw attention to the Zong Massacre of 1781 – the murder of around 130 Africans who had been thrown overboard the slave ship *Zong* so as to enable a claim for their loss to be registered against the ship's insurance policy.

He was also a key figure in a bizarre and disastrous scheme to create a new colony – dubbed the "Province of Freedom" – on the shores of Sierra Leone. There Britain settled the so-called "Black Poor", destitute former slaves who had served with British forces



Life story

The title page and frontispiece of Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, a first-hand account of his experience in slavery and how he seized his freedom

The biography of a man who had himself been enslaved became a key element in the great surge of abolitionist activity

during the American Revolution. Brought to Britain they were then largely abandoned by the authorities. When the scheme to resettle them in Africa descended into a spiral of corruption, Equiano became a whistle blower. Although his letters condemning the scheme did not prevent it from going ahead, they did make Equiano moderately famous, and that fame became the springboard that led to him writing the *Interesting Narrative*.

Other black Georgians had already written and published their memoirs and letters (Ignatius Sancho posthumously in 1782, and Ottobah Cugoano in 1787, with the help of Equiano), and others such as Mary Prince did so later. But Equiano's narrative was to be the most significant of them all, in part because of the skill and lucidity with which it was written, but also because of the timing of its publication.

The book was released in the spring of 1789, two years after the Society For Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade had been founded, and during a year in which abolitionists – led in parliament by William Wilberforce – launched their first parliamentary bid to bring about the abolition of the slave trade. The *Interesting Narrative*, the biography of a man who had himself been enslaved, was a key element in that great surge of abolitionist activity of that year. Equiano was keenly aware of his position, writing that the text was “the production of an unlettered African, who is actuated by the hope of becoming an instrument towards the relief of his suffering countrymen”.

Yet while the book had a profound impact upon those who read it, 1789 was not to be the year in which the slave trade was abolished. The revolution in France so horrified the British elite that any form of radical political or commercial change was dismissed as dangerous and destabilising.

Booming business

Deploying the skills he had acquired while trading between the Caribbean Islands, Equiano built the *Interesting Narrative* into an ongoing business. After publishing the first edition himself he retained the rights to his words, at a time when it was often deemed wiser to license books to publishers. With Equiano committed to promoting his book, the *Interesting Narrative* went through eight further English editions – a huge number for the late 18th century – and each new edition contained new passages that expanded the book, keeping it up-to-date with ongoing developments in the struggle against slavery.

Every edition also contained an expanding list of subscribers: wealthy and influential figures who supported Equiano in the writing of the *Interesting Narrative* by



Edge of the frame

A black attendant stands to the side of Elizabeth Murray, Lady Tollemache. Black Georgians were included in hundreds of portraits as “fashionable accessories” of the main sitters

Men of letters

Ignatius Sancho (right, shown in 1768) and Ottobah Cugoano (far right, in 1784)

both had their writing published. However, Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* was to prove more influential



Fighters for change Two 2007 commemorative stamps showing abolitionists William Wilberforce and Olaudah Equiano. Both worked to bring about abolition, with Wilberforce leading the charge in parliament

purchasing copies before that edition's completion. Succeeding editions attracted further subscribers, with their names printed at the front of the book. Among them were aristocrats and celebrities. The most notable were John Wesley the Methodist preacher, and members of the royal family.

Equiano not only constantly refreshed the contents of the *Interesting Narrative*, but he also promoted sales through an intermittent speaking tour that lasted from 1789 to 1794. Tapping into the growing network of abolitionist supporters and sympathisers, he trekked across Britain and Ireland. Yet this was not a book tour in the modern sense: it was a feature of the great abolitionist campaign, as everywhere Equiano went he spoke against slavery, doing so with the authority of a man who had escaped its clutches and witnessed its horrors. This way Equiano contributed to the movement for abolition not just as an author, but also as a campaigner and public speaker.

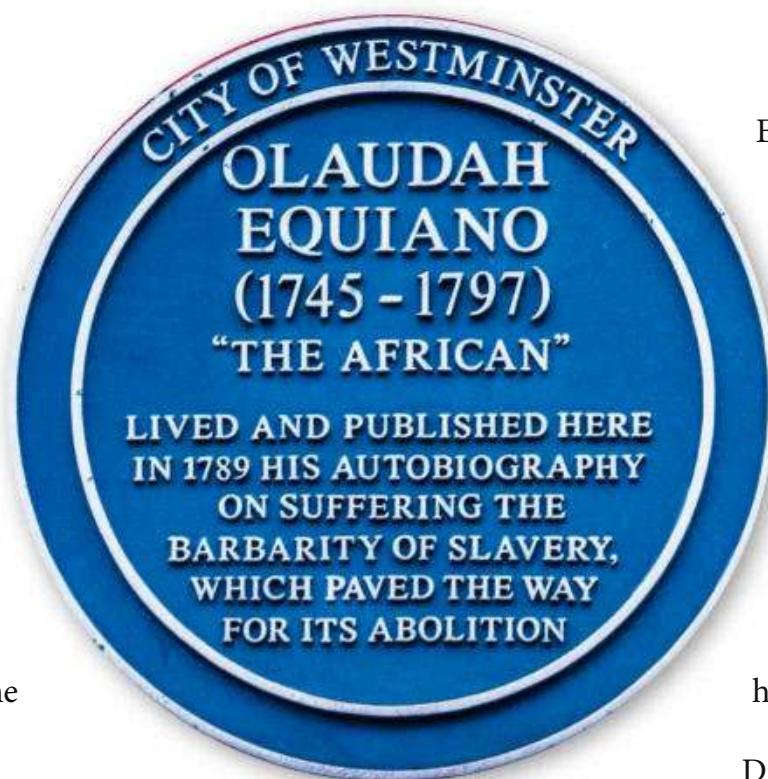
It was in the 1790s, as his fame grew, that Equiano married. In 1792 Susanna Cullen, who hailed from Cambridgeshire, became his wife. Two daughters followed in 1793 and 1795, before tragedy consumed the young family. Three years into their marriage, Susanna died. The following year the couple's elder daughter also passed away, as did Equiano himself. His surviving daughter, Joanna Vassa, was left an orphan, although eight years of sales and her father's energetic promoting of the *Interesting Narrative* meant she was left an estate worth around £1,000.

The margins of history

Despite being widely celebrated at the time of his death, Equiano's fame rapidly faded. After his passing the abolitionist movement advanced and evolved. In 1807 an act for the abolition of the slave trade passed through parliament. In the 1830s, after rebellions in the Caribbean led by the enslaved themselves, slavery as an institution was swept away.

The histories of the abolition movement that were later written focused on the lives of the white abolitionists. William Wilberforce was the subject of a secular canonisation that meant his story eclipsed the contributions of others. Olaudah Equiano, along with many of the female abolitionists who had been central to the campaign against slavery in the 1820s, were brushed to the margins of history and largely forgotten.

It was only in the 1960s that historians began to recover the story of Equiano, and the *Interesting Narrative* was once again reprinted. Since then Equiano's fame has



Honoured home

The heritage plaque dedicated to Equiano that is affixed to the site of his London home. His memoir is now also taught at universities around the world

Since the 1960s Equiano's fame has ballooned to proportions that arguably exceed that of his own lifetime

grown to proportions that arguably exceed that of his own lifetime. The site of his London home now carries a heritage plaque, and the *Interesting Narrative* is a set text on university courses across the world. There is also an Equiano Society that celebrates his life and his writing, and even a brand of rum that carries his name.

Olaudah Equiano left us with a powerful, first-hand account written by a man who had experienced slavery, but he also bequeathed historians with a mystery – there is one aspect of the *Interesting Narrative* that complicates his story. In the *Narrative*

Equiano asserts to have been born in what is today Nigeria. Yet there are some historians and literary scholars who now call that claim into question.

Fact or fiction?

Back in the 1980s the Nigerian academic SE Ogude suggested that the early chapters of the book are a work of fiction. He argued that Equiano's description of the society from which he said he had been stolen was based on literary sources available at the time of writing rather than first-hand experience.

A decade later another literary expert, Dr Vincent Carretta, uncovered two tiny details in the archives that might suggest that Equiano was not born in Africa, but was instead born into slavery in Britain's North American colonies. When as a child in 1759 Equiano had been brought to England by Michael Pascal he was baptised at Saint Margaret's Church, Westminster, and in the records of that ceremony he was described as "Gustavus Vassa, a Black [man] born in Carolina 12 years old". However, critically, that information was not provided by Equiano himself. Over a decade later in 1773, Equiano – by then a freeman resident in London – signed on as a crewman in a famous expedition to the Arctic. In the documents of the expedition he is described as having been born in South Carolina. Although again, there are doubts about the veracity of that evidence.

However, other historians suggest that Equiano's account of Africa appears flawed not because it is fictional, but because it is built upon the memories of a young child. And it is uncertain how much can be read into the two archival entries that suggest he was born in Carolina.

While these questions of Equiano's place of birth remain unanswered, what is certain is that Equiano's words, both in the *Interesting Narrative* and in his many speeches, were those of a man who had lived as a slave and felt its brutality. As such they were enormously powerful at the time, and are enormously valuable today. **H**

David Olusoga is a historian and broadcaster. He has written the foreword for a new edition of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, out now from Hodder & Stoughton. He is also presenting a new series of *A House Through Time*, which is streaming now via BBC iPlayer



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Innovative new pillow transforms lives

A father's love and devotion leads to incredible new patented pillow

A NEAR tragedy has led to an amazing new development in sleep technology. When Georgia Miles was recovering from a life-threatening accident, her father Alexander looked everywhere for a pillow that would keep her comfortable throughout the night.

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Harley Street Consultant and Spinal Pain Specialist

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Actor Rula Lenska loved the Gx pillow so much that she contacted Gx to say exactly that. She said that 'she was so surprised and delighted that something advertised as life changing could turn out to be exactly as described.' Having suffered from chronic neck and back pain she added that 'the pillow made a big difference and was positively magical for my neck.'



Alexander Miles, inventor of the Gx Pillow pictured with his invention

Made in the UK, the Gx Pillow comes in a choice of two levels of support: Medium-Soft, which most people seem to prefer, or Medium-Firm for those who like a little more resistance. Alex's desperate desire to help his daughter Georgia has led to a pillow that has also transformed the lives of thousands of people. So if you have spent a lifetime looking for the perfect pillow, your search may well be over!

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BLOOD RIVALS

Elizabeth I and her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots constantly feuded over power, culminating in Mary's execution. **Susan Doran** explores their turbulent relationship through 12 objects from a new British Library exhibition dedicated to the queens

Power struggle

Elizabeth I (shown in a 16th-century portrait) and Mary, Queen of Scots (shown in black, in a 1610–15 portrait) had a fraught relationship, as both sought to secure England's crown

GETTY IMAGES



1 Powerful bloodline

Poem in praise of Henry VII's marriage to Elizabeth of York, c1487

Elizabeth and Mary were first cousins once removed. Both were descendants of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, whose marriage in 1486 had symbolically ended the Wars of the Roses, and is celebrated in this c1487 poem. The flowering roses in its border illustrate the union of the white rose of York and red rose of Lancaster. Born in 1533, the daughter of Henry VIII, Elizabeth was the granddaughter of the couple, whereas Mary – born later, in 1542 – was their great-granddaughter, descended from their eldest daughter Margaret who had married James IV of Scotland.

Despite their shared Tudor inheritance, the dynastic differences between the two royal women were profound. Mary was unimpeachably legitimate, the daughter of James V of Scotland and Mary of Guise, whom he had wed in 1538. By contrast, Elizabeth had been bastardised by act of parliament on her mother Anne Boleyn's execution in 1536. Mary became a queen at six days old after her father's death in December 1542, whereas Elizabeth inherited the throne aged 25, after the reigns of her siblings, Edward VI and Mary I. Finally, Mary, Queen of Scots was kin to the powerful French Guise family, creating a relationship that proved vitally important throughout her life. Elizabeth's kin were all English.

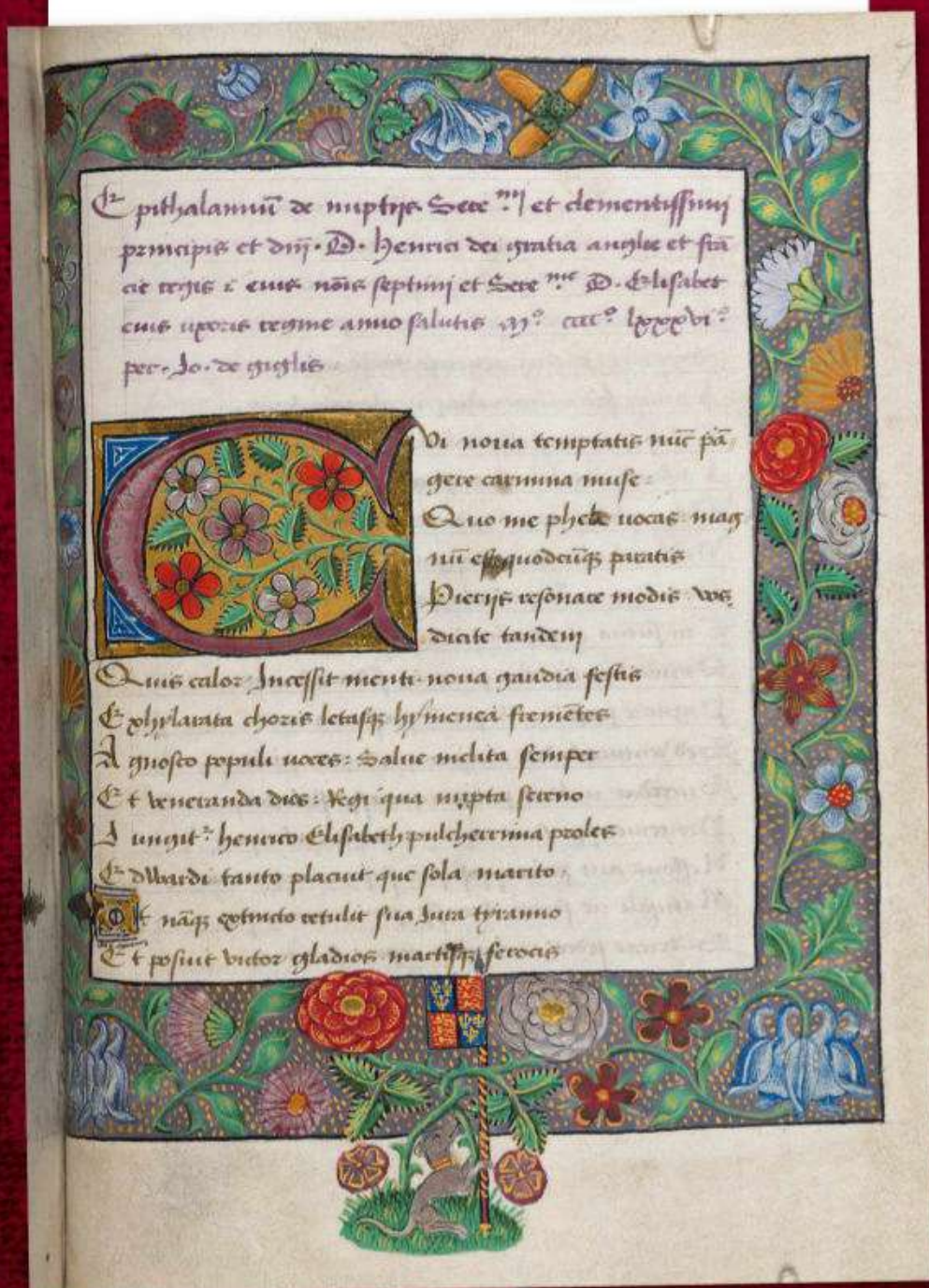


2 Romance and rebellion

Portrait of Mary, 1558–60

This exquisite watercolour miniature shows Mary placing a ring on the fourth finger of her right hand, a gesture that likely marks her marriage on 24 April 1558 to Francis, the French Dauphin (eldest son of the French king). Mary had sailed to France in 1548 to avoid capture by the English, who had invaded Scotland with the intent of marrying her to Edward VI and thereby uniting the two realms. Around the same time, Henry II of France had sent troops to Scotland to oust the English army which had established garrisons there. The marriage of the Scottish queen to his heir was intended to absorb Scotland into France.

Mary's education in France initially focused on the courtly arts but was extended in 1553 to rhetoric and languages. Elizabeth had the better education in the classics but experienced greater difficulties before her accession, especially during the reign of her half-sister Mary (1553–58). Suspected of involvement in rebellion, Elizabeth was ordered to the Tower of London in March 1554. When released in May, she was placed under house arrest in Woodstock until April 1555. For the rest of Mary's reign, Elizabeth was allowed to live in her own household but was closely watched.



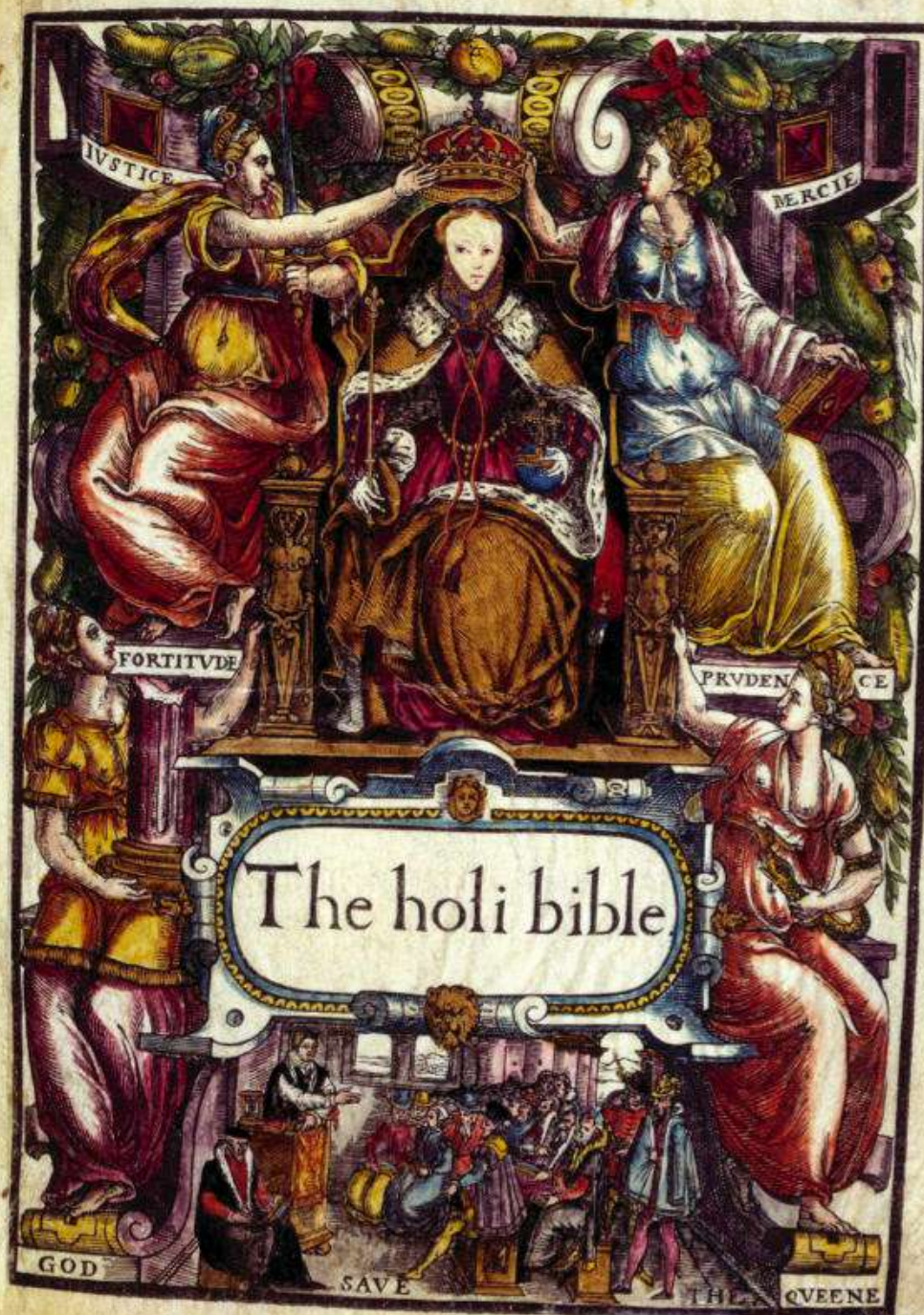
3 Religious rift

Title page of the Holi Bible, 1569

This Bible's title page shows Elizabeth as supreme governor of the Church of England, surrounded by figures representing four classical virtues. Beneath the title is a minister preaching to his congregation – preaching being the primary function of a Protestant clergy. This small book was probably a presentation copy for private devotion, but folio versions, first printed in 1568 and known as the "Bishops' Bible", were used in parish churches.

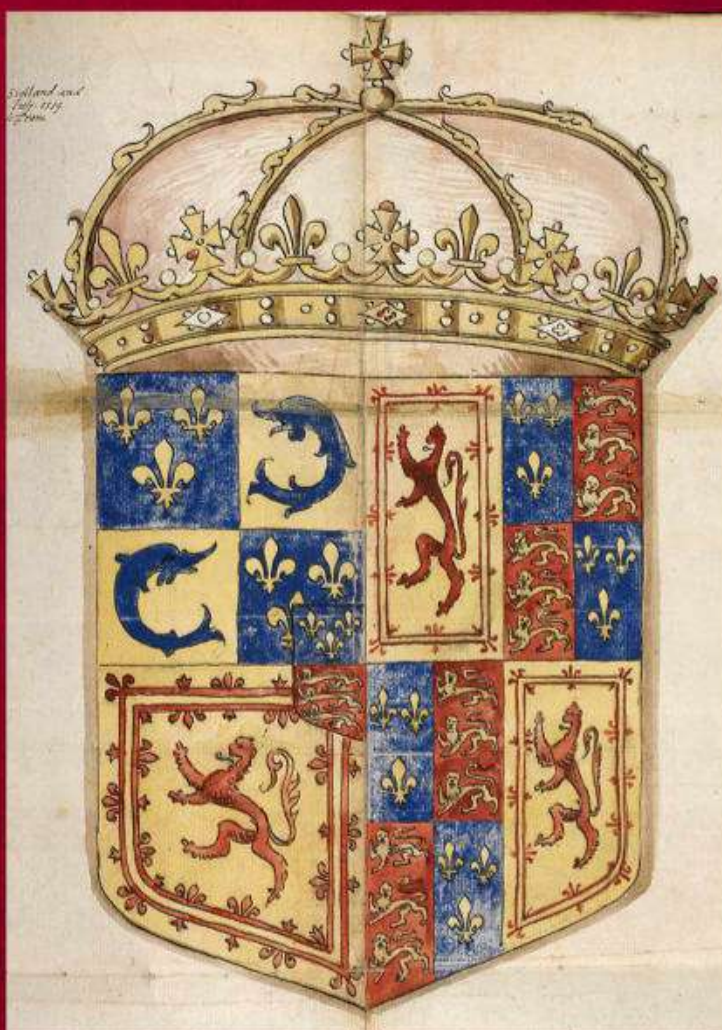
The Elizabethan church was officially Protestant. During the 1530s Henry VIII had broken with Rome and initiated religious changes, such as the wholesale dissolutions of monasteries, but it was Edward VI's government that introduced an English prayer book, abolished the mass, attacked "idolatrous" images and allowed clerical marriage. Once queen, his sister Mary restored Roman Catholicism so successfully that it was hard for Elizabeth to reintroduce the reformation. A 1559 parliamentary statute enforced a Protestant prayer book, but a large minority of Catholics refused to use it or did so only partially.

Scotland became Protestant around the same time because the regent, Mary of Guise, failed to crush a Protestant rebellion. In August 1560 a Scottish parliament ended papal authority and introduced a Protestant Confession of Faith, more Calvinist than that in England. Back in France, Mary, Queen of Scots remained Catholic.



4 Coming after the crown

Arms of Mary, Queen of Scots and the French Dauphin, sent from France in July 1559



England's ambassador to France sent this drawing back to the Privy Council as evidence that Mary and the Dauphin Francis were quartering their arms with those of England, hence claiming Elizabeth's throne. The queen's principal secretary and chief adviser William Cecil interpreted this heraldic initiative as a serious threat. Indeed, on Elizabeth's accession, the French had lobbied the pope to support Mary's title. But, despite Elizabeth's heresy, the pope refused, for he would not alienate Philip II of Spain, who was vehemently opposed to any extension of French power.

The danger from France seemed less acute when Henry II signed a peace with

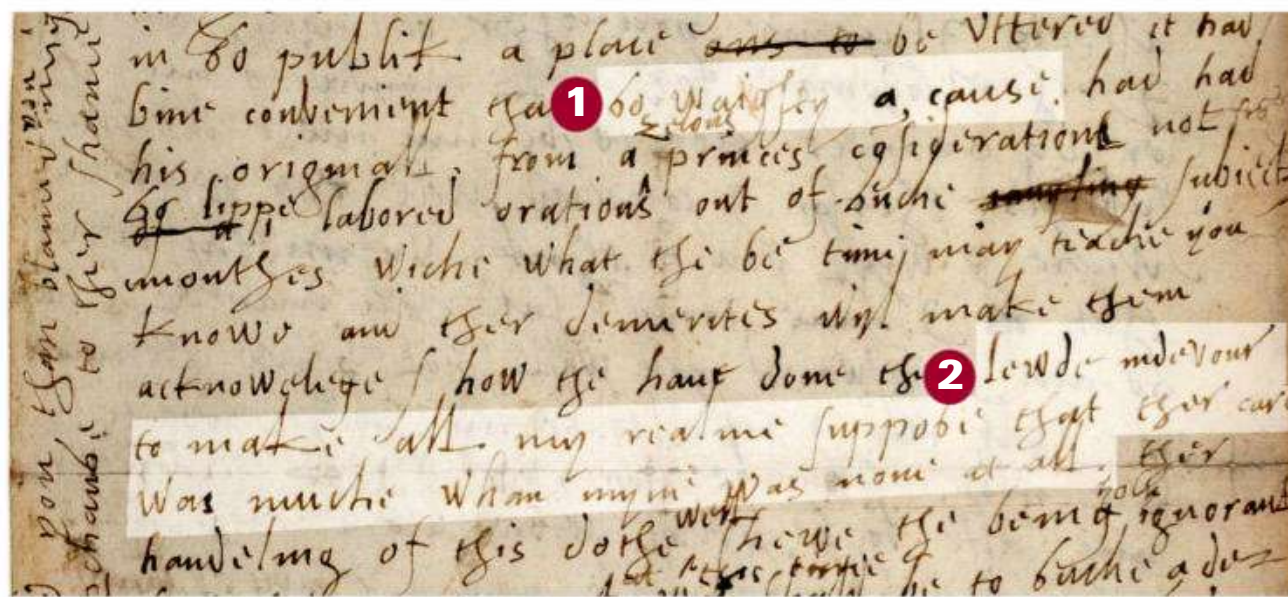
Elizabeth in April 1559. However, he was mortally wounded in a jousting accident in July, and Mary's husband became king of France, with her Guise uncles prominent in government. Consequently, when Francis II sent troops to Scotland to help Mary of Guise suppress the rebellion of the Protestant Lords of the Congregation, the English government feared a French attack against Elizabeth would follow. Elizabeth therefore agreed to help the Protestant Lords. After the fortress at Leith capitulated to the Protestant allies, the French and English signed the Treaty of Edinburgh (6 July 1560) in which Elizabeth was recognised as rightful queen of England.

5 The succession crisis boils over

Handwritten draft of Elizabeth's speech dissolving parliament, 1567

Mary would not sign the Treaty of Edinburgh because she believed it compromised her right to be Elizabeth's successor. A diplomatic battle immediately arose between the two queens as Elizabeth attempted to obtain her signature on the treaty, while Mary refused to ratify it unless Elizabeth first recognised her as heir presumptive. This Elizabeth refused to do. The conflict between the two queens over this issue, which began while Mary was in France, continued after her return to Scotland in 1561 and lasted well into the 1580s.

Parliament wanted Elizabeth to name a Protestant successor and not Catholic Mary. In 1563 and 1566 it called on Elizabeth to marry and/or name her heir, and this document is a draft of Elizabeth's furious answer to the Commons' call in 1566. Here she



admonishes them for raising "so weighty a cause" **1** in such a public place, and for "their lewd endeavour to make all my realm suppose that their care was much, when mine was none at all" **2**. Despite Elizabeth's rebuke, the 1571 parliament

raised the issue of succession again. It passed a statute excluding from the succession anyone challenging Elizabeth's title, a shot at Mary. To the English queen's relief, it also prohibited public discussion of the succession.

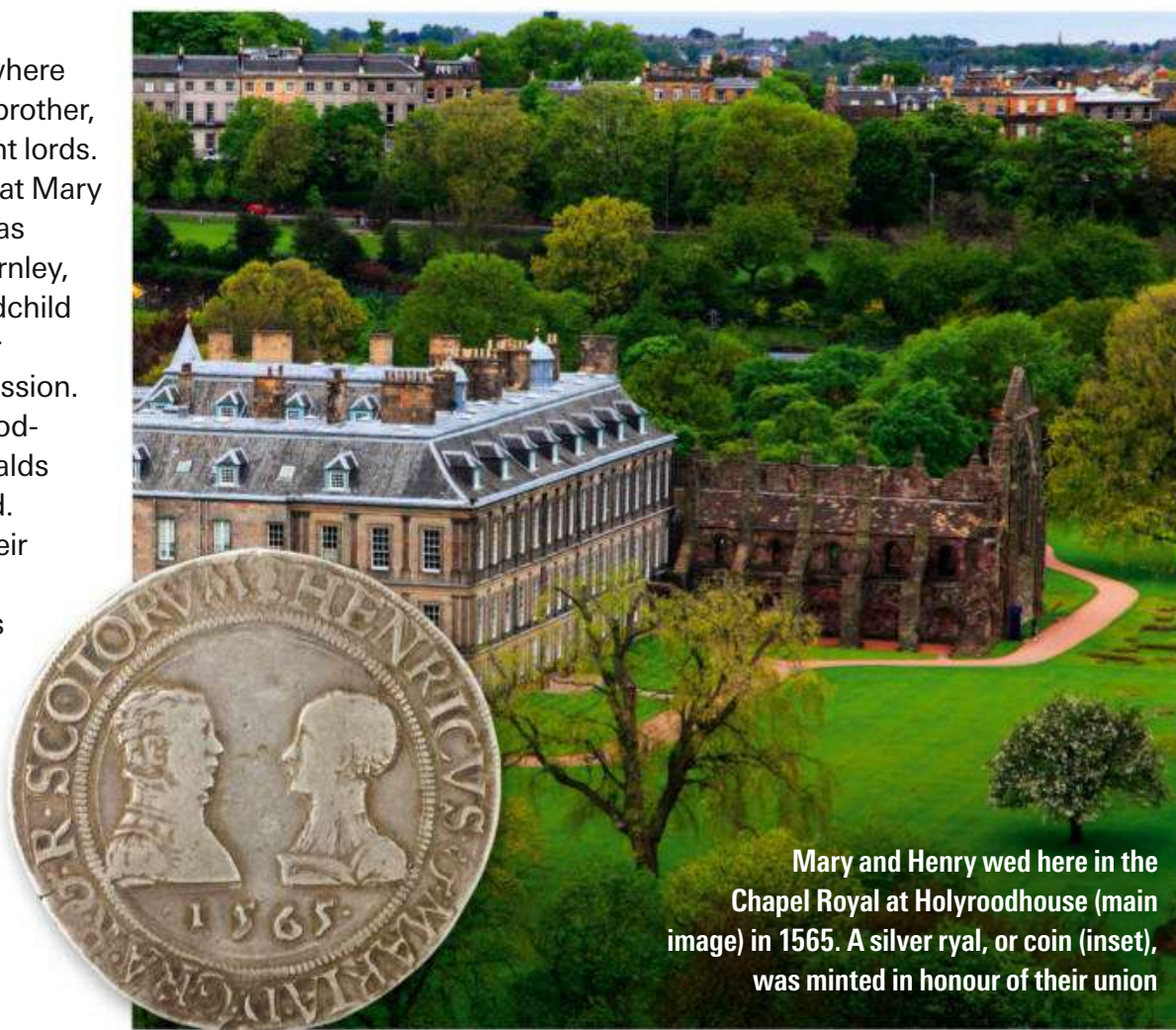
6 Miserable marriage

Silver marriage ryal of Mary, Queen of Scots and Henry, Lord Darnley, 1565

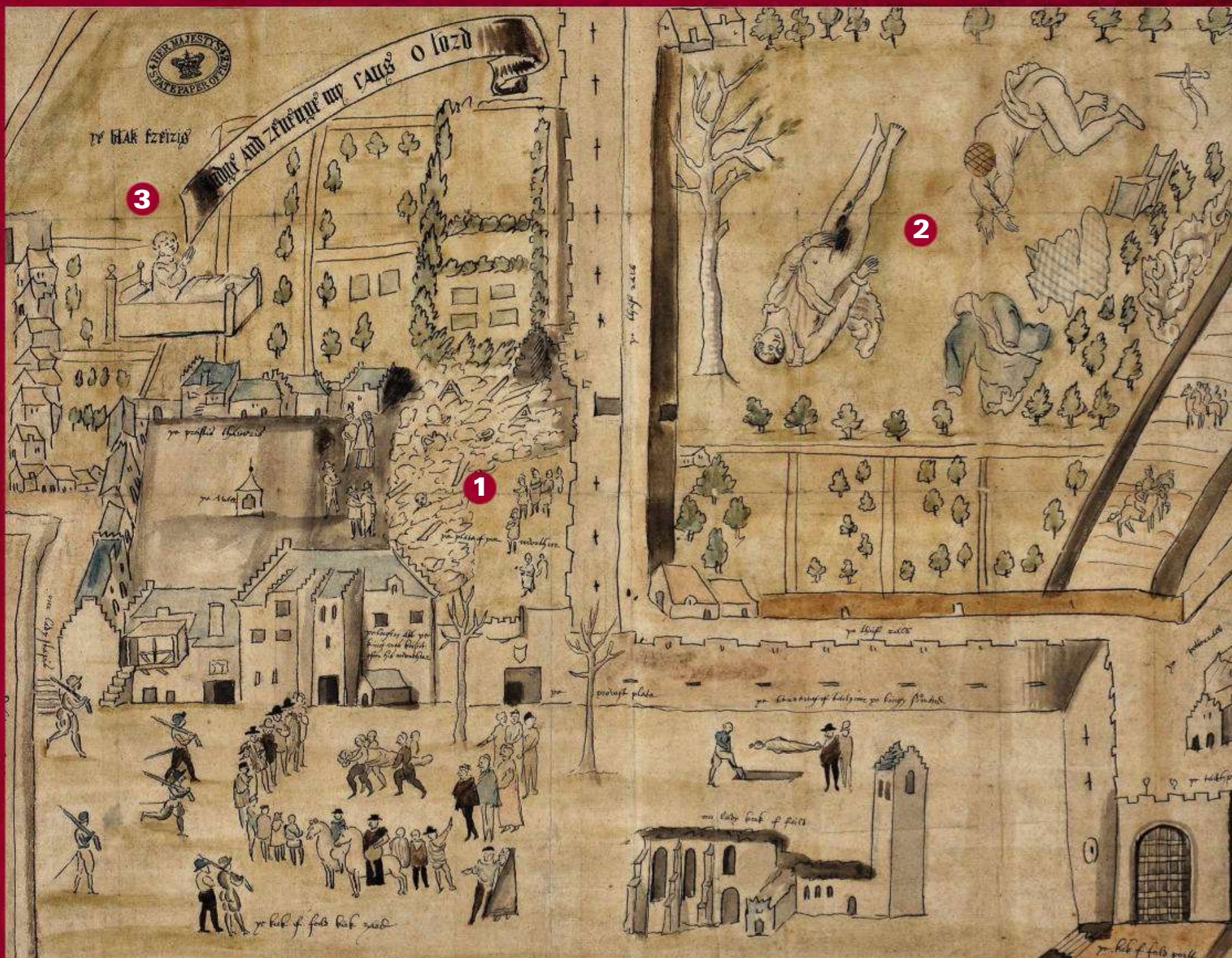
Mary's first husband died in December 1560. The following August she returned to her homeland where she ruled with the support of her illegitimate half-brother, James Stewart, Earl of Moray, and other Protestant lords. For security reasons Elizabeth was determined that Mary should not marry a foreign Catholic prince, but was dismayed when she chose Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, for a second husband. Darnley was another grandchild of Margaret Tudor, and their marriage united their hereditary claims to the English throne and succession. The couple married in the Chapel Royal at Holyroodhouse on 29 July 1565. The following day the heralds proclaimed Darnley's new title of king of Scotland.

The obverse of this coin minted in 1565 has their names and titles surrounding their busts. Henry's name and title as king of Scotland comes first; his bust is also placed on the privileged left-hand side. However, after the wedding, Mary's name appeared first on new coins, much to Henry's annoyance. As a male, he fully expected to be the dominant partner.

Mary's second marriage reopened political feuds in Scotland and alienated Moray, who took up arms against his queen. Elizabeth refused to support the rebels, who ended up fleeing Scotland and taking asylum in England.



Mary and Henry wed here in the Chapel Royal at Holyroodhouse (main image) in 1565. A silver ryal, or coin (inset), was minted in honour of their union



7 Suspicious slaughter

Drawing of Henry, Lord Darnley's death, 1567

Charming before their marriage, Darnley became abusive afterwards, mainly because of Mary's refusal to allow him the crown matrimonial which would give him equal status with her. As their relationship deteriorated, he also resented her intimacy with her secretary David Rizzio. In March 1566 he was complicit in Rizzio's murder in the presence of his distraught wife, who was then six months pregnant.

After the birth of their son, James, on 19 June, the couple's relationship remained strained. Then in February 1567, Henry was murdered while lodging at Kirk O'Field in Midlothian. This drawing, made for William Cecil, provides a bird's-eye view of the murder scene. It shows the rubble of Kirk O'Field, partially blown up by gunpowder (1), which was laid in the cellar by the assassins, and the uncovered

bodies of Henry and his manservant in a garden (2), where they had been suffocated after escaping from the house. In the top left of the drawing, the infant James calls out the words from Psalm 43: "Judge and Revenge my cause O Lord." (3)

Horrified at the news, Elizabeth urged Mary to punish her husband's murderers, including a prominent Scottish noble James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, if – as was rumoured – he was involved. Mary did not heed this advice, and on 15 May she married Bothwell.

A 1567 portrait of Henry, Lord Darnley. After his death, Mary promptly married the man rumoured to have been involved in his murder



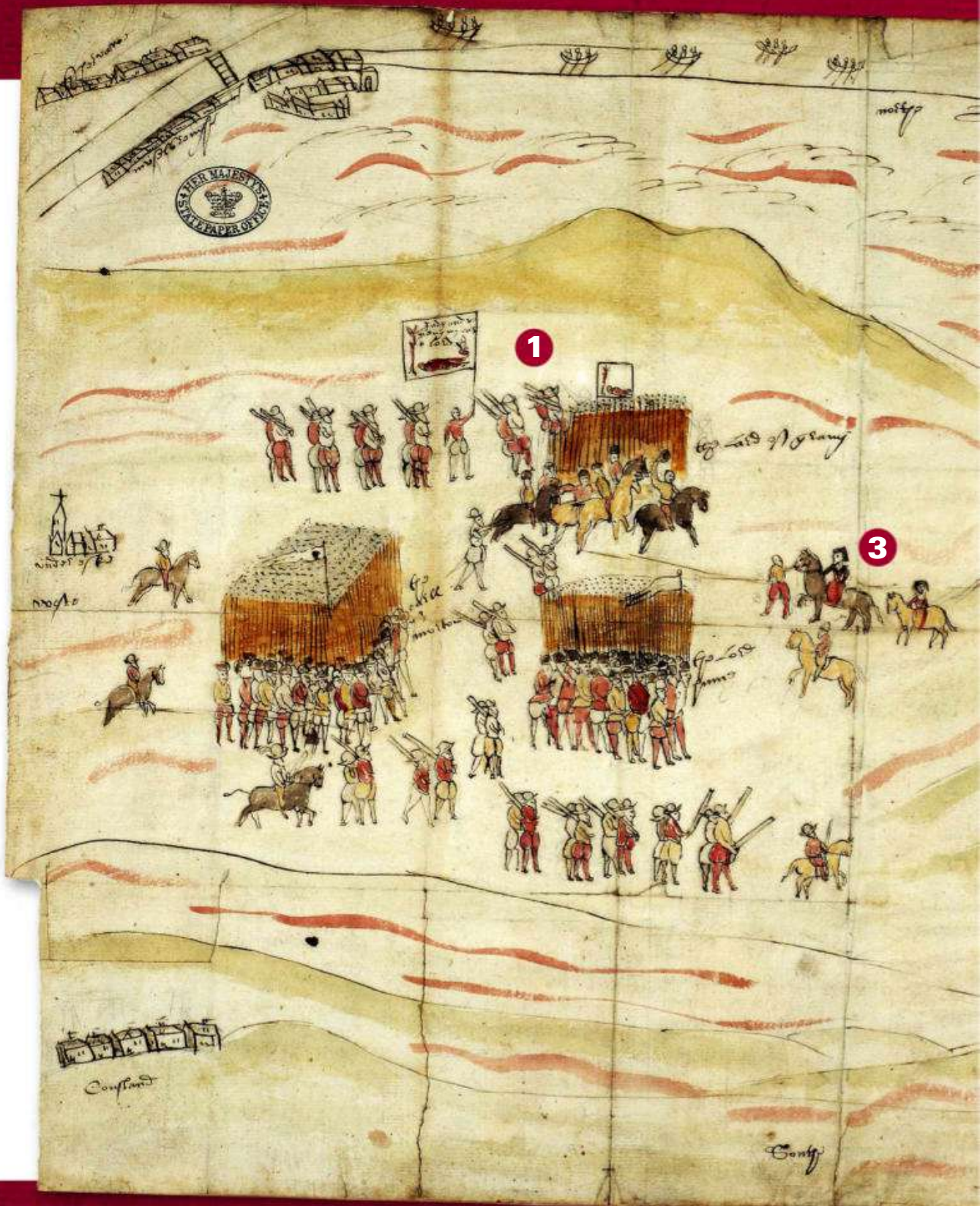
8 Battling for Scotland's future

Drawing of the battle of Carberry Hill, 1567

Scottish opponents of the Bothwell marriage confronted Mary and her husband on 15 June 1567 at Carberry Hill, near Edinburgh. This bird's-eye view depicts the scene. The rebel lords display two banners showing Darnley's corpse **1**, with one bearing the words from Psalm 43. Mary is shown twice: on the right where she rides side-saddle among her soldiers on the ridge in the "queen's camp" **2**, and in the centre where she rides to talk with the rebel lords **3**.

As a result of these negotiations, Mary surrendered. Her army had drifted away during the hot day of inactivity, and she was persuaded that the lords would give Bothwell a safe conduct and treat her honourably. After a night in custody in Edinburgh, where she had to face cries of "burn the whore", she was escorted to Lochleven Castle. Suffering a miscarriage, ill, distressed, and under duress, Mary agreed to abdicate.

Elizabeth was enraged at Mary's treatment. But her Privy Council persuaded her not to intervene militarily on the grounds that it would put Mary's life at risk. All Elizabeth could do was use diplomacy to demand that Mary be set free. But the rebel lords ignored her. On 29 July, James was crowned king with Moray as his regent.



9 Trapped below the border

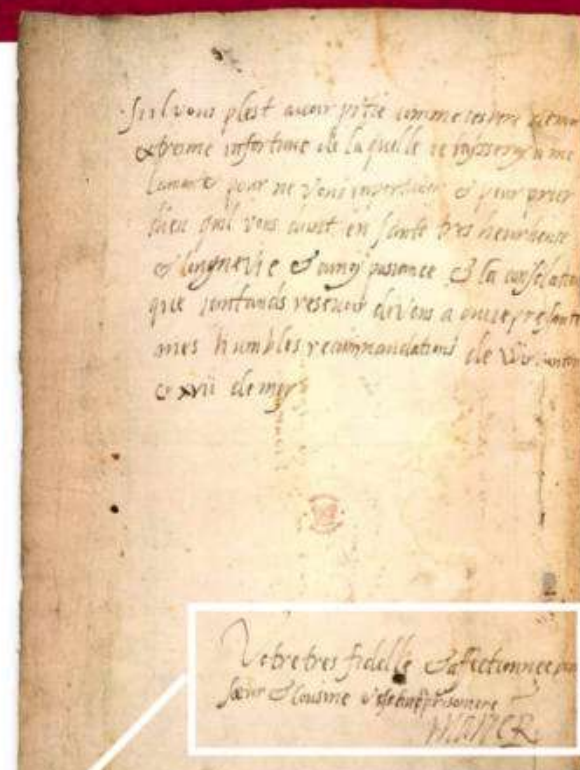
A letter Mary wrote to Elizabeth, 1568

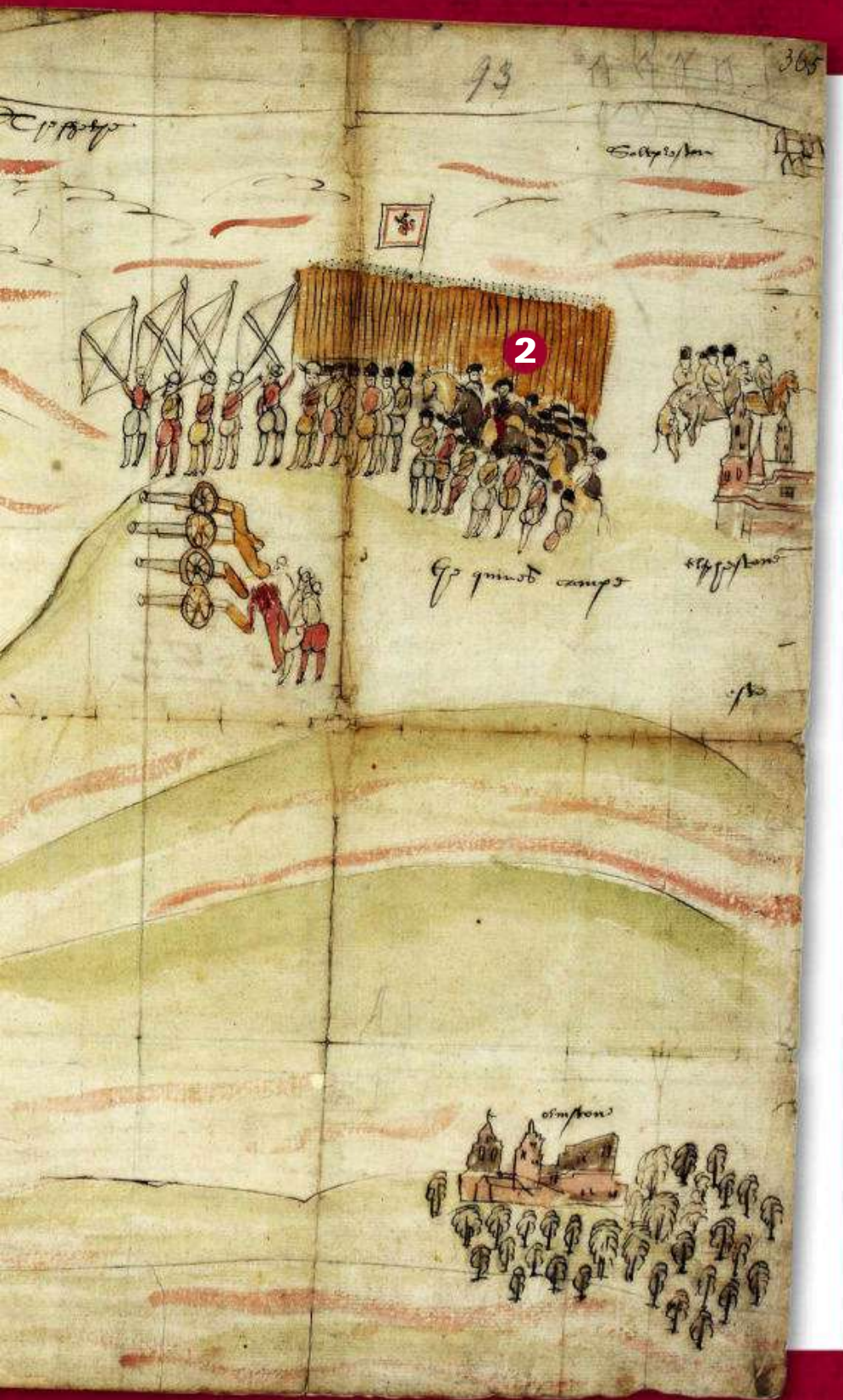
Mary wrote this letter to Elizabeth after her flight to England in May 1568. Escaping from Lochleven, she had raised a large army which was routed by Moray's men at the battle of Langside. Mary then fled and crossed into England on 16 May. The next day she composed a letter in French, where she described her plight and entreated Elizabeth for aid in her "just quarrel". She signed herself "your very faithful and affectionate good sister, cousin, and escaped prisoner" (see right).

Mary's arrival created a dilemma for Elizabeth. Considering Mary's deposition unlawful, Elizabeth was sympathetic to her, but she also recognised the security risk from a Catholic

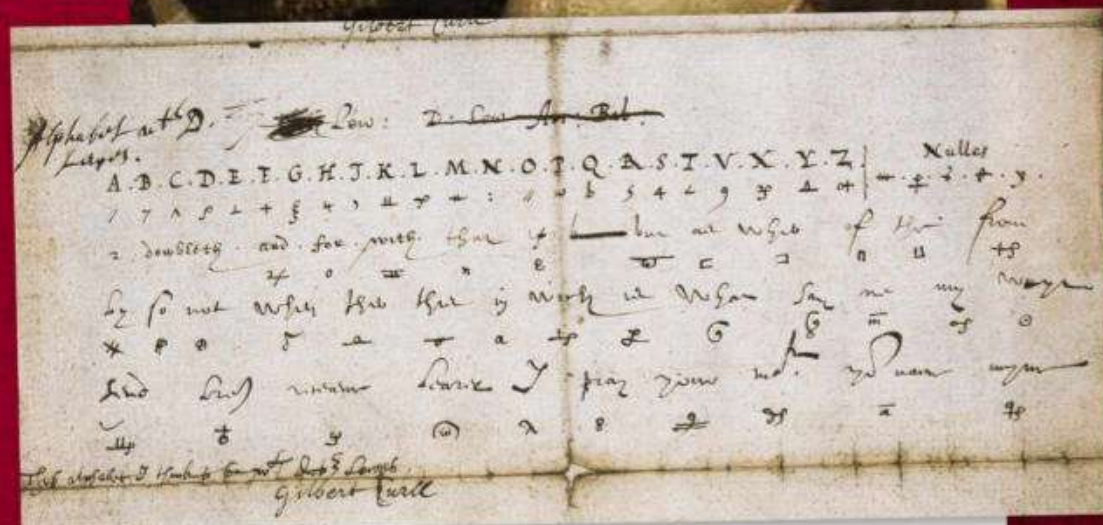
claimant to her throne based in England. She wanted Mary restored to the Scottish throne, but Moray would not hear of it and produced the "Casket letters" (these were apparently sent between Mary and the Earl of Bothwell and imply they were involved in the death of Lord Darnley) to justify his rebellion on grounds that Mary was an adulteress and murderer. Cecil, too, opposed Mary's return.

Since Mary's arrival sparked a Catholic rebellion in the north of England in 1569 and a plot involving Spain and Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk (revealed in 1571), Elizabeth reluctantly decided to keep her cousin a virtual prisoner away from her court. Religious wars were consuming France and the Netherlands; Elizabeth had to avoid similar upheavals shaking England.





A 1616 portrait believed to show the conspirator Anthony Babington, who schemed with Mary to murder Elizabeth I in the "Babington Plot"

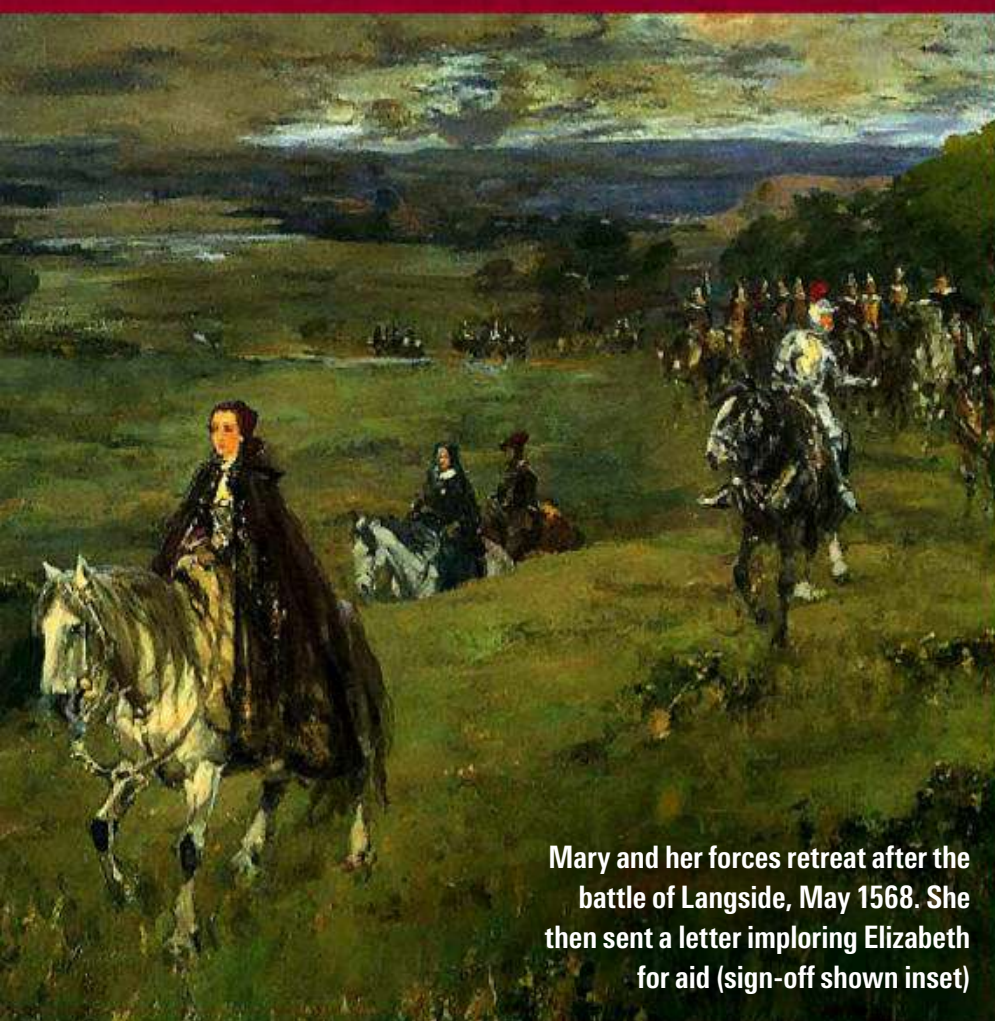


10 Murder plot

Cipher Mary used to communicate with plotter Anthony Babington, 1586

Mary's long imprisonment caused her anguish and anger. Several times she tried to negotiate her release, but each attempt failed. Her protestations of loyalty to Elizabeth were disbelieved and, besides, successive Scottish regents and her son (when no longer a minor) put obstacles in the way of her return. While negotiating her freedom during the 1580s, a desperate Mary also became engaged in plots.

Although closely guarded, Mary corresponded with the outside world using ciphers for secrecy. One common code was when letters of the alphabet were rearranged in a certain sequence. Another code was for individual letters to be substituted with numbers, characters, symbols, or signs of the zodiac. Shown here is the cipher Mary used to communicate with the Catholic plotter Anthony Babington, as set out by the code-breaker Thomas Phelippes, who was employed by Sir Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth's secretary and spymaster. It consisted of 23 symbols which could be substituted for letters of the alphabet (three letters were excluded) and 35 symbols that represented individual words or phrases. Additionally, there were four "nulls" or blanks that had no meaning, and another symbol which signalled that the next symbol represented a double letter.



Mary and her forces retreat after the battle of Langside, May 1568. She then sent a letter imploring Elizabeth for aid (sign-off shown inset)

11 On trial for treason

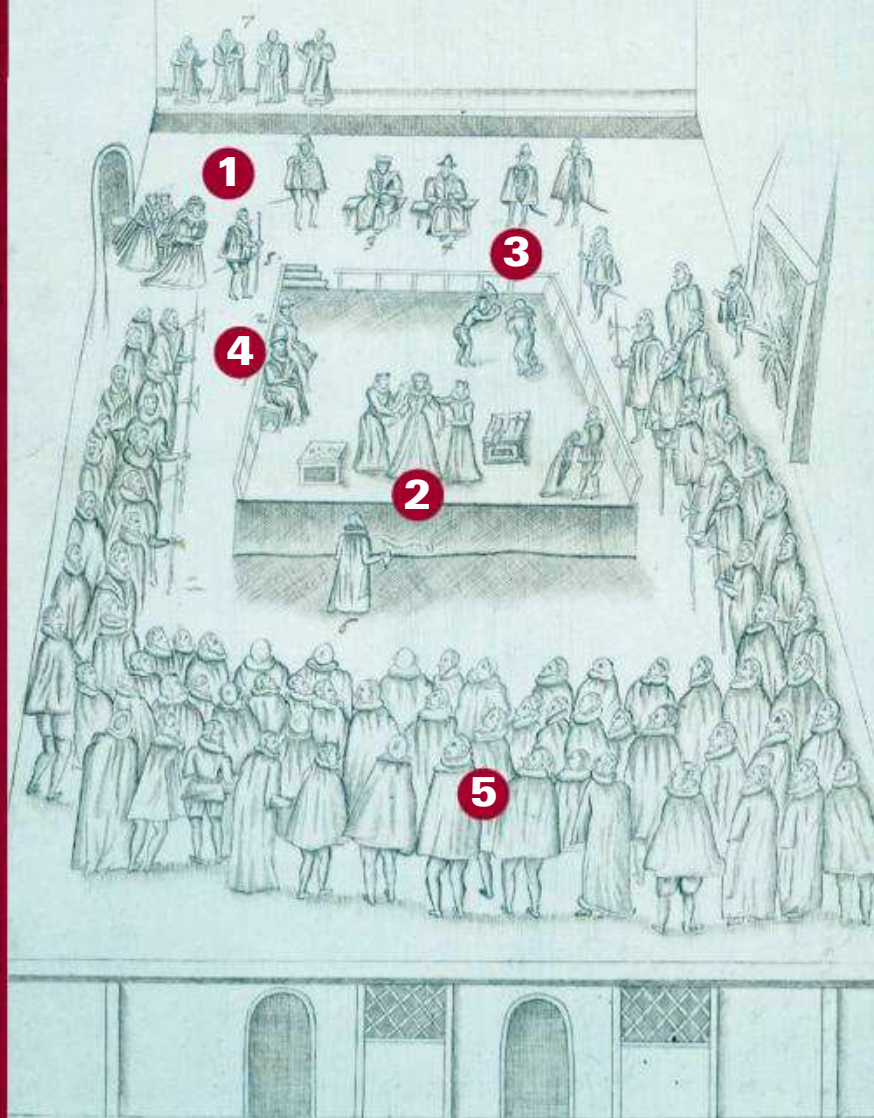
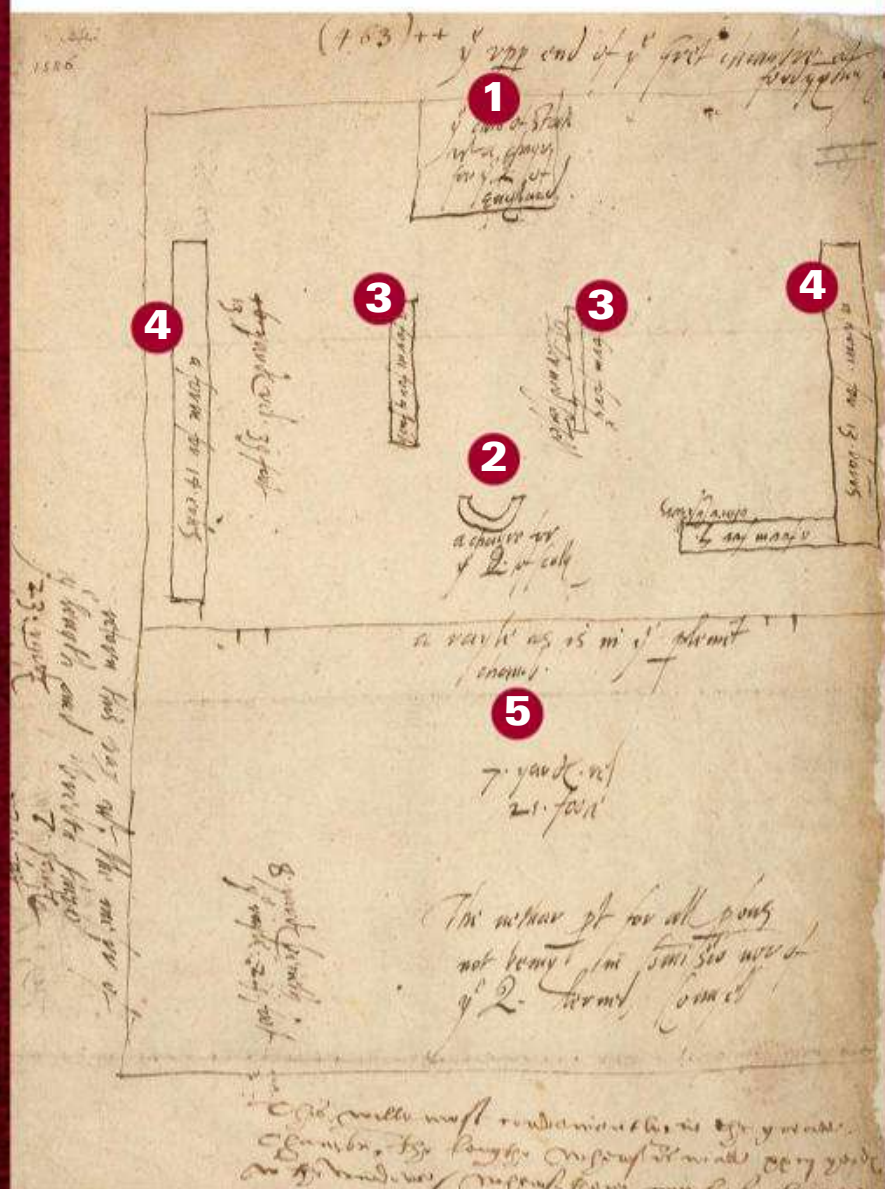
Seating plan for Mary's trial, 1586

Intercepting Mary's correspondence, Walsingham knew from the outset about the Babington Plot. Since one of her letters to Babington seemingly expressed Mary's approval of Elizabeth's assassination, Elizabeth agreed to bring her cousin to justice. Before the two-day trial opened on 14 October 1586, Babington and 13 co-conspirators were found guilty of treason and hanged, drawn and quartered.

William Cecil, Lord Burghley oversaw the practical arrangements for the trial and drew up the below diagram of the seating plan at Fotheringhay Castle in Northamptonshire, the site chosen by Elizabeth for the hearing. A chair of state, standing for the queen of England, who would not attend, is placed at the top, and a chair for "the Q. of Scots" is positioned in the centre. Between the queens are two parallel benches at which four justices and the Privy Council were to sit. Behind Mary's chair is a dividing rail, "as is in the parliament chamber", behind which local gentry were permitted to stand. "Forms" or benches are arranged on both sides of the hall for peers of the realm.

At the trial Mary came before the judges to deny the charges, but a guilty verdict was inevitable. It was delivered in Star Chamber in London on 25 October and proclaimed throughout the capital.

**Chair of State ①; Mary ②; Judges ③;
Peers of the Realm ④; Gentry (standing) ⑤**



12 A bloody end

Drawing of Mary's execution, 1587

This drawing of Mary's execution on 8 February 1587 comes from the papers of an eyewitness, Robert Beale. Mary is depicted three times: at the top left, entering the Great Hall behind the sheriff ①; in the centre, facing the onlookers, being disrobed by her gentlewomen ②; and top right, on the platform, kneeling at the block with the executioner ready to strike ③. Also on the platform are the earls of Shrewsbury and Kent ④. A crowd of spectators stand to watch ⑤.

Determined to be seen as a Catholic martyr, Mary arrived holding a crucifix and Latin prayer book, and wore an *Agnus Dei* around her neck and a rosary attached to her girdle. Refusing Protestant prayers, she declared she was "settled in the ancient Roman Catholic religion, and mind to spend my blood in defence of it". Disrobed, she revealed a petticoat and bodice of blood-coloured crimson, the liturgical colour of Catholic martyrdom.

When Elizabeth learned of the execution, she was distressed and angry. She had reluctantly signed the death warrant but had preferred Mary to be killed quietly by her gaolers rather than have a public execution. Although she later denied responsibility for the act, few believed her. **H**

Susan Doran is professor of early modern British history at the University of Oxford. Her catalogue to the exhibition *Elizabeth and Mary: Royal Cousins, Rival Queens* is out on 8 October

VISIT The British Library exhibition **Elizabeth and Mary: Royal Cousins, Rival Queens** is open from 8 October to 20 February 2022. bl.uk/events/elizabeth-and-mary

LISTEN Melvyn Bragg and guests discuss **Mary, Queen of Scots** in an *In Our Time* episode. bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b088fs7z

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Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

What was the Bradford sweets poisoning?

►►► On 30 October 1858, William Hardaker – known as “Humbug Billy” – was selling peppermint lozenges at Bradford’s Saturday market. As usual, he had bought them from sweetmaker James Appleton, who was employed by Joseph Neal. When Hardaker fell ill after sampling one of the humbugs, though, he did not make the connection that something might be wrong with the sweets, so his stall stayed open all day and more than 1,000 humbugs were sold.

By Sunday morning, two local boys had died suddenly and dozens more people were gravely sick. Police quickly made the link between victims and the humbugs, and rushed around town warning people not to eat them. Each humbug, it later transpired, contained a potentially lethal amount of arsenic. The eventual death toll was 20 or 21, with 10 times as many sick.

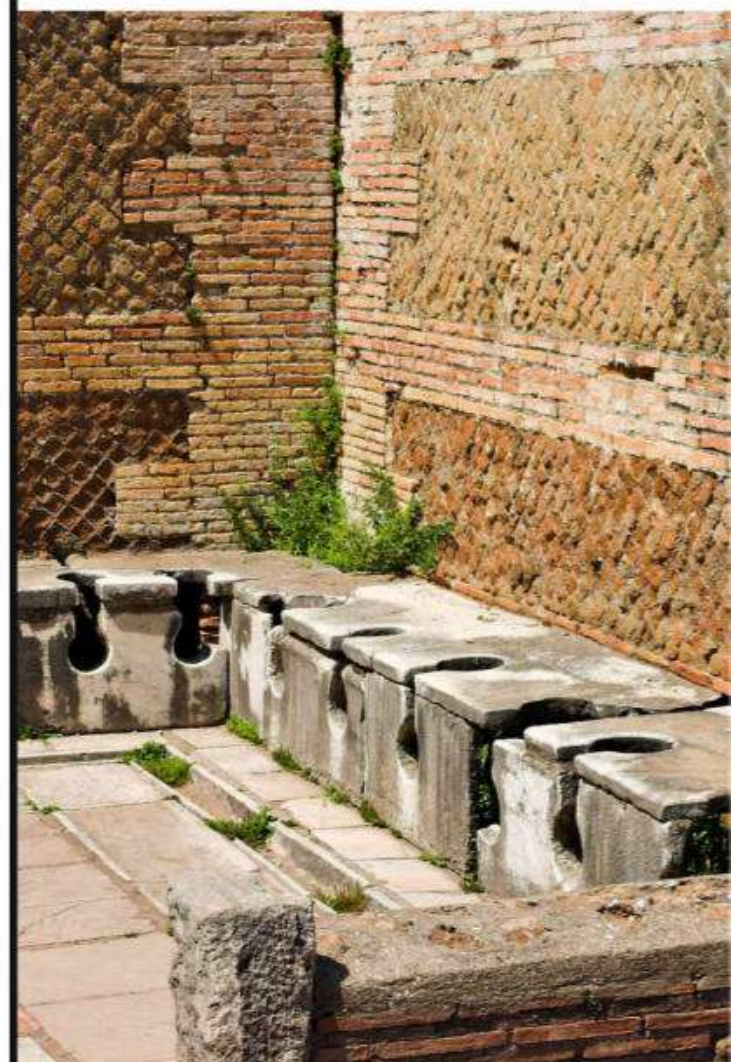
The investigation found that Neal regularly used cheap powdered gypsum

– plaster of Paris – to replace some of the expensive sugar content. He bought it from Shipley pharmacist Charles Hodgson, but on this occasion, Hodgson’s assistant William Goddard mistakenly served Neal’s messenger an identical-looking white powder from the wrong cask. The fatal batch of peppermint humbugs was made with arsenic trioxide.

Hodgson, Neal and Goddard were charged with manslaughter, but Hodgson was acquitted and the other cases dropped.

The tragedy made national headlines: “Little pills of sugared death,” said *The Times*, adding to growing anger among consumers who already knew much of their food was adulterated. The case was one of the triggers for the 1868 Pharmacy Act, regulating the sale and storage of poisons, and was invoked in arguments for later food purity laws.

.....
Eugene Byrne, author and journalist specialising in history



Water flowing beneath ancient Roman latrines (above) washed away waste. The first known flushing toilet was designed in the 1590s

Who invented the world’s first flushing toilet?

►►► Simple loos, emptied by pouring rainwater from jugs, were installed around 3,500 years ago in Minoan palaces on Crete. Some 1,500 years later, water flowing along channels beneath communal Roman latrines swept away waste.

But the earliest known contraption we might recognise as a flushing toilet was the invention of Elizabethan author and courtier Sir John Harington. His “Ajax” – a pun on “jakes”, slang for a privy – was carefully described and illustrated in a ribald satire published in 1596 under a pseudonym. His water closet featured a handle to flush the “stool pot” with water from a cistern above, and a valve to open and close the bottom of the pot.

Harington installed an Ajax in his home at Kelston, near Bath, in preparation for a visit by his godmother, Queen Elizabeth I, and another at her palace at Richmond. Sadly, neither survives today.

.....
Paul Bloomfield, writer whose exploration of the history of toilets is at toilet-timeline.org

ALAMY



The Bradford sweets poisoning is satirised in this *Punch* cartoon, where a skeleton makes sweets from plaster of Paris and arsenic. At least 20 people died

Edward Makuka Nkoloso (left) and one of his afronauts, Godfrey Mwango, 1964. Nkoloso spearheaded the Zambian space programme



Did Zambia have a space programme?

At the height of the space race in the 1960s, a Zambian school teacher named Edward Makuka (or Mukuka) Nkoloso announced the existence of the Zambian space programme, and proclaimed himself the founder of the Zambia National Academy of Science, Space Research and Philosophy. A dedicated space enthusiast, he wanted Zambia to become the first country to go to the moon (within one year) and then to reach Mars.

He recruited 12 teenagers who would be his astronauts, or “afronauts”, and trained them on a farm outside of the capital, Lusaka. To replicate the feeling of zero gravity, Nkoloso rolled them in oil drums and he made them walk on their hands in the belief that that was the only way to get around on the moon.

Afronaut Matha Mwamba was the one chosen to be sent to space in Nkoloso’s aluminium and copper rocket D-KALU 1, for which Nkoloso never laid out the plans. But he declared that space-age Zambia would be more sophisticated than the United States and the USSR. However, despite his personal requests to Unesco and foreign countries, no funds were raised – all Nkoloso received were letters from well-wishers.

Nkoloso’s dream of sending afronauts to space was never fulfilled, but he was buried with presidential honours and his efforts inspired several artworks,



A 1964 newspaper piece covering Nkoloso’s plans to go to Mars. He hoped to reach the red planet after Zambia had become the first country to go to the moon

films and documentaries, such as the photobook *Afronauts*. In the words of author Cristina de Middel: “The story is pleasant at a first level, but it is built on the fact that no one believes that Africa will ever reach the moon.”

So far, no Zambian space programme, agency or satellite has been launched. Yet Zambia is a member of the African Union, which adopted the African Space Policy and Strategy, paving the path for the African Space Agency.

Dr Annette Froehlich, honorary adjunct senior lecturer at the University of Cape Town, South Africa

DID YOU KNOW...?

Pole stars

During the 1920s there was a craze for pole-sitting, with individuals striving to see how long they could spend perched on top of a wooden pole. The star performer, who in 1930 sat on top of a 69-metre-high pole in Atlantic City for 49 days and 1 hour, was a former movie stunt man named Alvin “Shipwreck” Kelly (right). Towards the end of his career, Kelly calculated that he had spent 20,613 hours sitting on flagpoles, 1,400 of them in the rain.



Deadly judgment

A Confucian scholar dragged his own coffin into an audience with the first Ming emperor of China, Hongwu (reigned 1368–98), and climbed into it immediately after delivering a stinging critique of the ruler. Hongwu had decreed that anyone questioning his policies would be put to death, so the scholar expected instant execution. According to some sources, the emperor was so impressed by the man’s bravery that he spared the scholar and allowed him to leave the court.

Terrible titles

Gone With the Wind, Margaret Mitchell’s epic novel set during the American Civil War and made into a famous Hollywood film of the same name (below left), might have been called, less impressively, *Baa! Baa! Black Sheep*. This was one of several options that the American novelist considered. She also had moments when she thought that *Tote the Weary Load* or *Bugles Sang True* would be catchy titles for her magnum opus.

Her final choice comes from a verse by the dissolute 1890s poet Ernest Dowson. **H**

Nick Rennison, writer and journalist specialising in history



THE FIRE



INGLINE

From the Sahara to Europe's frozen borderlands, the Sherwood Rangers were at the very heart of the fight against Nazi Germany. **James Holland** recounts this regiment's extraordinary road to victory

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HEAT OF THE BATTLE

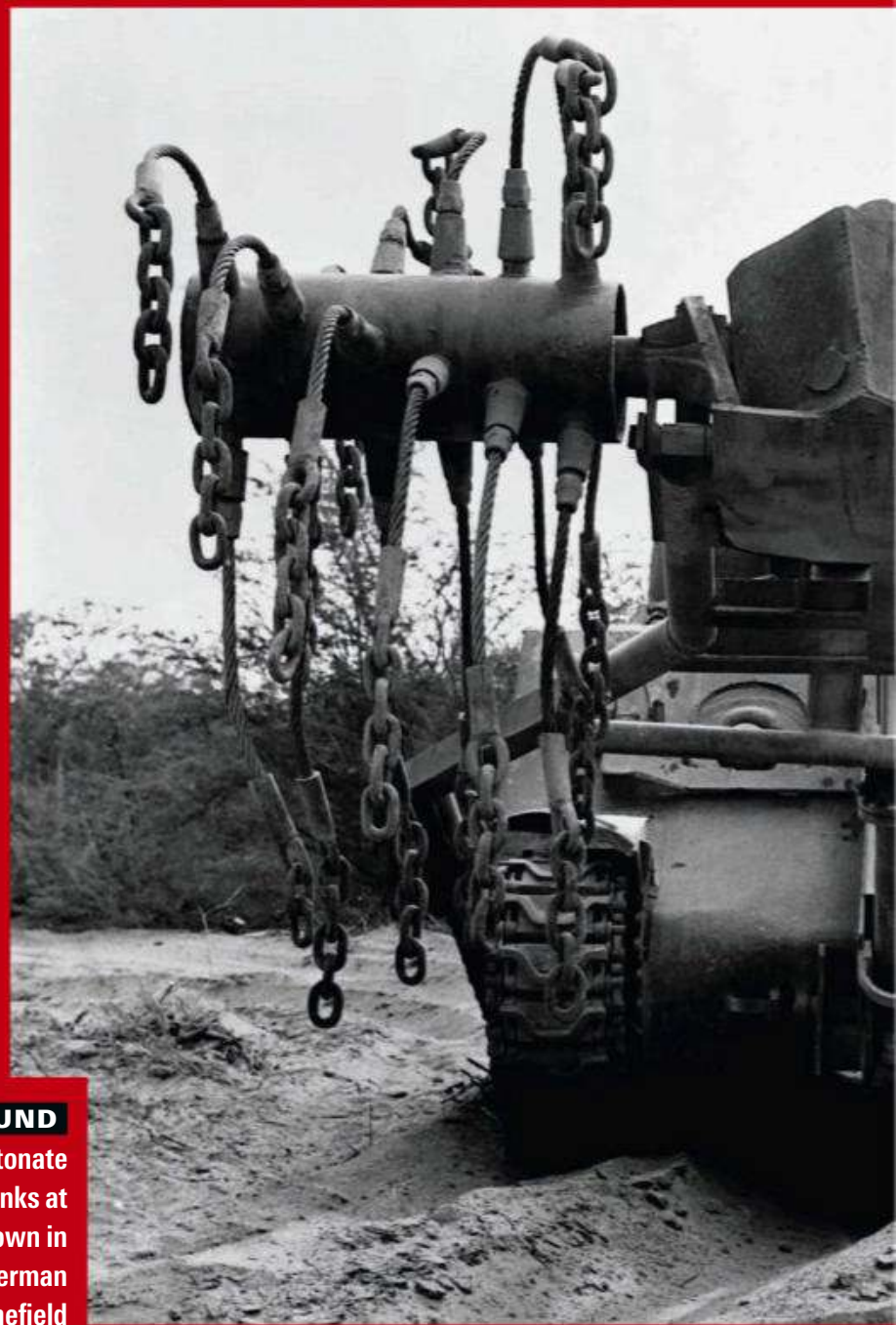
A Sherwood Rangers tank in action alongside American infantry in the German town of Geilenkirchen, November 1944. The Rangers began the war as a cavalry outfit, but ended it with more battle honours than any other unit in the British Army ►

A Second World War tank regiment



BATTLE SCARRED

Major John Semken in the turret of his tank at Bois du Homme in Normandy, 31 July 1944. Semken participated in the Sherwood Rangers' assault on Geilenkirchen but was so scarred by his experiences he was invalided home



FLAILING AROUND

A Marine M4 Sherman uses flails to detonate mines. The Rangers used four flail tanks at Geilenkirchen but all became bogged down in the mud, leaving John Semken's Sherman stranded in a minefield

A little after 6am on 18 November 1944, Operation Clipper – the battle to smash wide open the defences in the German border town of Geilenkirchen – erupted in a blaze of fire and fury. The plan was for four flail tanks, with their rotating chains, to clear two lanes through the minefields and for the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry – a British armoured regiment in the vanguard of the Allied assault on Germany – to follow and clear the bunkers. American infantry, only arrived in Europe in October and never before tested in combat, would then pour through and, together with the British armour, further clear the Siegfried Line, the enormous defensive network that guarded Germany's western border.

Allied artillery was already thundering, sending over a heavy barrage, while searchlights had been brought in to help light the way, a double-edged sword if ever there was one. Conditions were appalling: the freezing cold, the dark, the rain – which inevitably worked its way into the tank because the hatches were open. Periscopes were

ineffective at the best of times but especially when streaked with rain, which meant Major John Semken, the squadron commander, had his head out of the turret of his Sherman tank, and so did Johnny West, his driver.

The first flail tank to approach the minefield broke down in the mud before it had even started. Soon after, a second flail became bogged in the mud. This meant a path that was supposed to be four tanks wide was now two. Then a third flail became stuck and then the fourth, some 50 yards short of a railway line that lay ahead.

Semken, who was leading A-Squadron, had to reverse or push on regardless through the uncleared mines. He now radioed all of A-Squadron, 19 tanks in all. They had a job to do: to get through the minefield and help the infantry. He was going to push on. If they hit a mine, then the next tank was to take over and so on, until they were across the railway and the minefield.

Staccato explosion

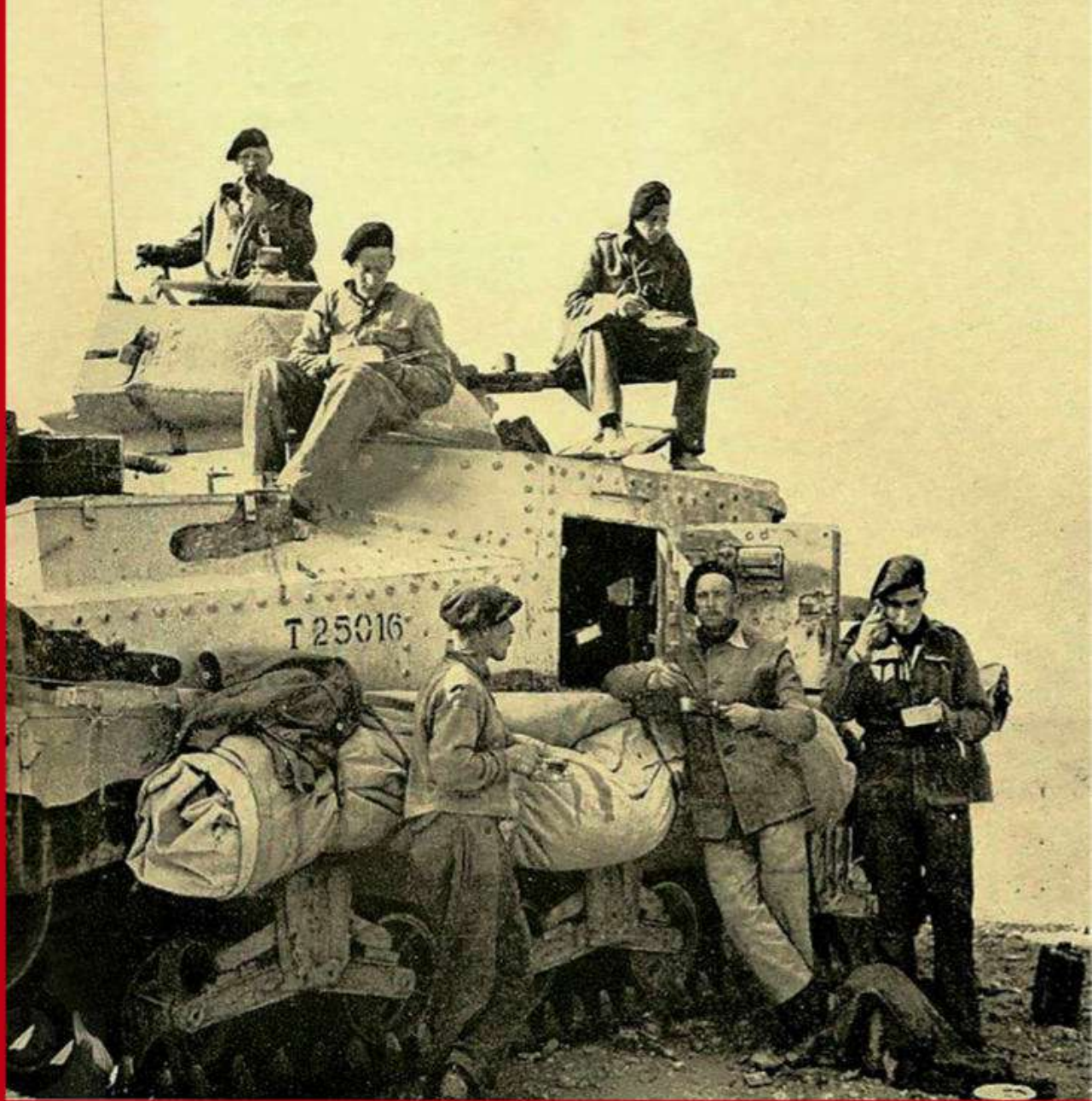
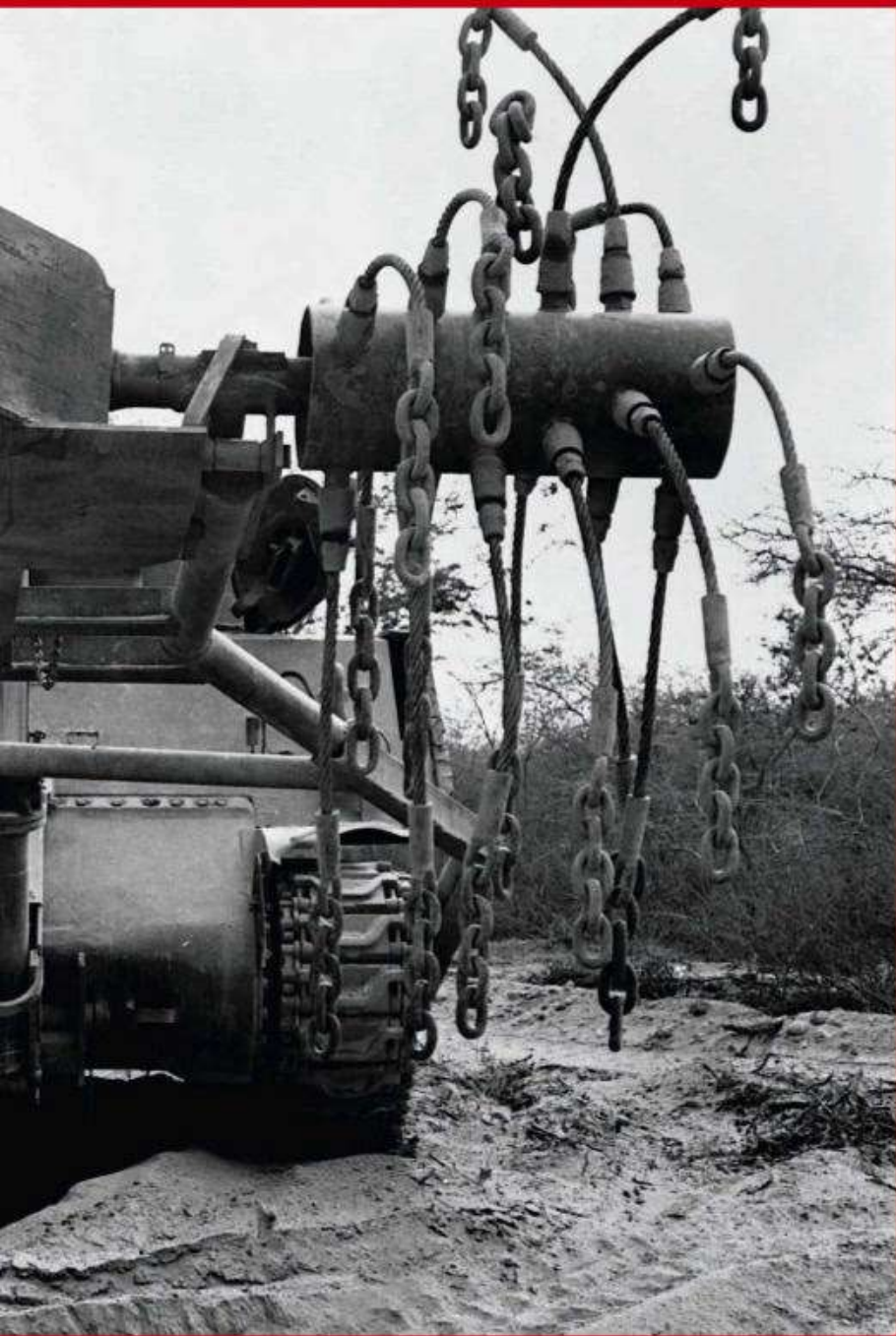
Everyone in Semken's tank was tense as they inched forward through the mud, waiting for the explosion that would surely come. Ten yards gone, then another. Small-arms tracer

stabbing through the dark, clattering around the tank. Then a massive staccato explosion that lifted the tank in the air and whammed it back down into the mud. Semken: was everyone all right? Yes. All answered. Incredibly, they had just detonated four mines simultaneously and survived. The Sherman, its tracks and wheels shattered, now lay in a big crater of mud.

The rest of A-Squadron pressed on, crossed the railway and made surprisingly good progress along with the rookie American infantry. Despite the mire and carnage, Operation Clipper was a success, the Geilenkirchen salient reduced and the line straightened with more room for the Americans now to manoeuvre.

Yet such success had come at a price. By the time the Sherwood Rangers were withdrawn six days later, 10 tanks had been destroyed, 15 damaged, and a further 12 lost forever in the mud.

The human cost for the Sherwood Rangers was worse still: 63 casualties in all, including 16 killed in action and a further three who would later die of their wounds. That made 326 casualties since D-Day, which was comfortably more than 100 per cent of the



DESERT RATIONS

A Sherwood Rangers crew with their tank in north Africa, probably around October 1942. In the turret is Colonel Edward "Flash" Kellett, who was killed in Tunisia in March 1943

regiment's tank crews at any one time.

"Everybody was going through the motions," wrote Peter Mellowes, an A-Squadron troop commander, "of living, fighting and waiting for their time to die." A further casualty was John Semken who, despite being back in a tank and commanding the squadron by 19 November, was soon sent home. "That was my last battle," he said of Geilenkirchen. "I lost my touch after that... After that, I was finished. And I was invalided home." He'd served throughout the north Africa campaign, and had then fought across western Europe since D-Day. He was just 23.

Hard yards of fighting

A huge amount was expected of the mostly young men who found themselves at the coal-face of war. Britain – and the United States – had a very sensible strategy of using their immense global reach, access to resources, industrialisation and technology to do as much of the hard yards of fighting as possible and to limit the numbers of men in the firing line.

On the ground, there were no longer massed divisions of infantry, but those that *did* take the field were superbly well supported

If a soldier was in the infantry or tanks, his chance of surviving unscathed was worse than in the First World War

by a long logistical chain. That's why 43 per cent of the personnel manning the British Second Army in north-west Europe were service troops running the long tail, while just 14 per cent were infantry. A consequence of this approach was that if a soldier was unfortunate enough to be in the infantry or tanks, his chances of surviving unscathed were worse than they had been in the First World War.

The Sherwood Rangers ended the war with more battle honours than any other unit in the British Army, which was no small feat, having been a prewar territorial part-time cavalry outfit that had headed off to Palestine in early 1940 still with their horses. They became mechanised in the autumn of 1941, with their first tank action at the battle of Alam Halfa at the end of August that year. They then played a key role at Alamein and from then were at the forefront of the fighting until the north African campaign was over in May 1943.

They were a somewhat eccentric bunch, initially mostly country folk from Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, but later expanded by a rich seam of characters drawn from all walks. Stanley Christopherson, for

example, who joined the Sherwood Rangers in 1939 and rose to take command of the regiment soon after D-Day, had worked in goldmines in South Africa and then the City before the war; John Semken was a Londoner and planned to become a lawyer.

The Sherwood Rangers had poets, printers and plasterers among their number. Men like Christopherson and Semken, who might never have worn a military uniform had it not been for the conflict, soon realised that war was a seriously bloody business and that the better they became, the greater their chances of survival. That, however, was only true to a point, because the more proficient they became in north Africa, so they were marked out as a class outfit good for greater things. By D-Day, on 6 June 1944, they were one of three tank regiments in 8th Independent Armoured Brigade, which meant they would be in the firing line, operating hand-in-hand with the infantry divisions to which they were attached.

Flush with weaponry

The Sherwood Rangers landed on Gold Beach on D-Day, successfully moved inland, helped capture the city of Bayeux on 7 June, and then the following day pushed further south, taking a key piece of high ground, Point 103, which overlooked the river Seulles valley and the villages of Tilly, St Pierre and Fontenay. There they met the Panzer Lehr, possibly the most experienced panzer division in the west at that time, and the 12th SS-Panzer Division "Hitler Jugend", both still flush with men and weaponry.

On 11 June, tragedy struck when regimental headquarters, a farmhouse in St Pierre, received a direct hit, with the commanding officer among those killed. Taking over command was Stanley Christopherson, who immediately imposed a firm but more open style of leadership that allowed for tactical flexibility.

The Sherwood Rangers were operating in terrain that was unfamiliar and for which

**They soon realised
that the better they
were at war, the
better their chances
of survival**

FIRE ENGINES

Three tanks that powered the Rangers' advance on Germany

► THE M4 SHERMAN HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ON THE MOVE

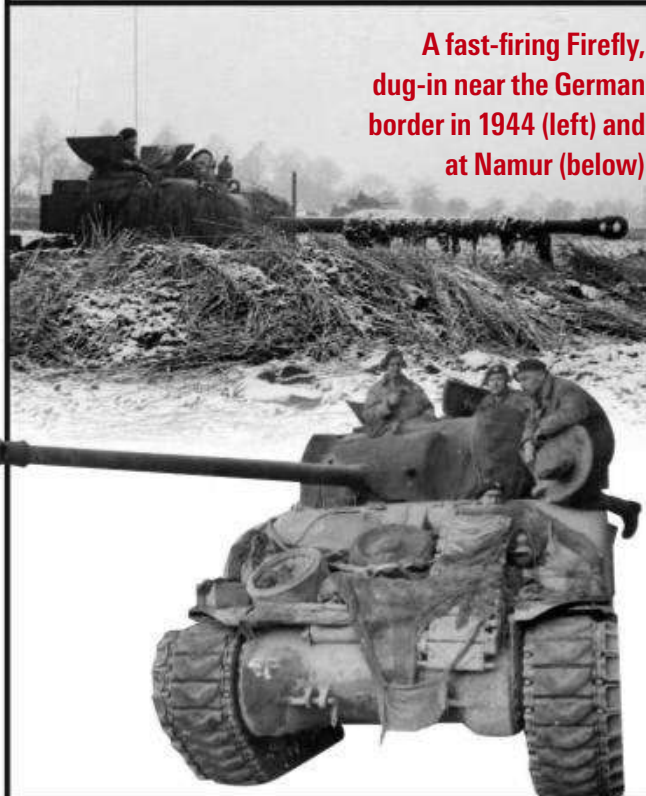
Some 49,000 Shermans were built in the United States, and numbers most definitely counted. It had a quick-firing main gun, two machine guns and, uniquely in the war, a gun stabilising gyro, which made it very effective on the move.

Highly manoeuvrable, the Sherman was easy to maintain and reliable. It had many advantages despite thinner armour and a less powerful gun than the German Panther or Tiger. Its gun could still prove highly effective in the close ranges of north-west Europe: Sergeant George Dring's crew, for example, knocked out two Panthers, one Tiger and two Panzer IVs on 26 June 1944 – all with their 75mm main gun.



ABOVE: British Army tanks are unloaded on to Gold Beach on D-Day

RIGHT: The M4 Sherman tank



A fast-firing Firefly, dug-in near the German border in 1944 (left) and at Namur (below)

◀ THE FIREFLY THE REGIMENT'S KILLER SHOT

This was a Sherman adapted by the British to house the 17-pounder anti-tank gun, a weapon that exceeded even the German 88mm in terms of velocity. When armour-piercing discarding sabot (APDS) rounds were introduced in August 1944, the 17-pounder could fire them at a staggering 4,000 feet per second, compared with around 2,900 for the 88mm. The barrel was too long for the body of the tank and the gun fired with a very bright muzzle flash – two disadvantages – but it certainly packed a punch and the crews soon learned how to use them effectively.

► THE M3 AND M5 STUART A "HONEY OF A TANK"

This light 16.5-tonne tank was also built in large numbers – 22,700 in all – and was fast and manoeuvrable. Although thinly armoured and equipped with only a 37mm main gun and machine gun, it was widely used for reconnaissance, the role for which the Sherwood Rangers employed it.

Although officially called the "Stuart" by the British, most British and Commonwealth troops knew it as the "Honey". This was because when it was first issued to British troops in north Africa, it was called a "honey of a tank" because it was so sweet to drive.



The "Stuart" tank (shown below and, above, c1944) was rapid and agile





SHARP SHOOTERS

Stanley Christopherson sits astride the barrel of a captured Tiger. Christopherson took command of the Rangers shortly after D-Day

THE HOT SEAT

Stanley Christopherson, below in 1939, and right (in Palestine, 1940). His open style of leadership gave the Sherwood Rangers the tactical flexibility to thrive in unfamiliar territory



QUICK OFF THE MARK

John Semken, below and left (with Captain George Culley). As commander of the Rangers' A-Squadron, Semken's mantra was to fire first and keep firing



TIMELINE

The Sherwood Rangers' remarkable campaigns

12 January 1940 The Sherwood Rangers leave England for Palestine with their horses

July 1940 The regiment loses its horses and retrain as artillery

April–July 1941 Half the regiment is deployed as gunners during the successful defence of Tobruk. The other half is involved in the battle for Crete

August 1941 The Rangers' training begins as an armoured regiment

31 August 1942 The regiment experiences combat in tanks for the first time at the battle of Alam Halfa in Egypt

May 1943 The north African campaign ends in Allied victory

December 1943 The Rangers return to the UK to train for D-Day

6 June 1944 D-Day sees the regiment landing on Gold Beach as a spearhead of the invasion of Europe

10–12 September 1944 The Rangers help British forces seize the Belgian city of Gheel following a bloody battle

17–25 September 1944 The regiment participates in Operation Market Garden, the failed attempt to establish a bridgehead in Germany

18–23 November 1944 Rangers tanks lead the assault on the German town of Geilenkirchen

January–March 1945 The Rangers play a prominent role in Operation Blackcock and Operation Veritable as Allied forces forge east

26 March 1945 Sherwood Rangers cross the Rhine in Operation Plunder

5 May 1945 The war ends for the Sherwood Rangers. During the course of the conflict it has won 10 battle honours in north Africa and 18 in the 11 months from D-Day to VE Day



A Second World War tank regiment



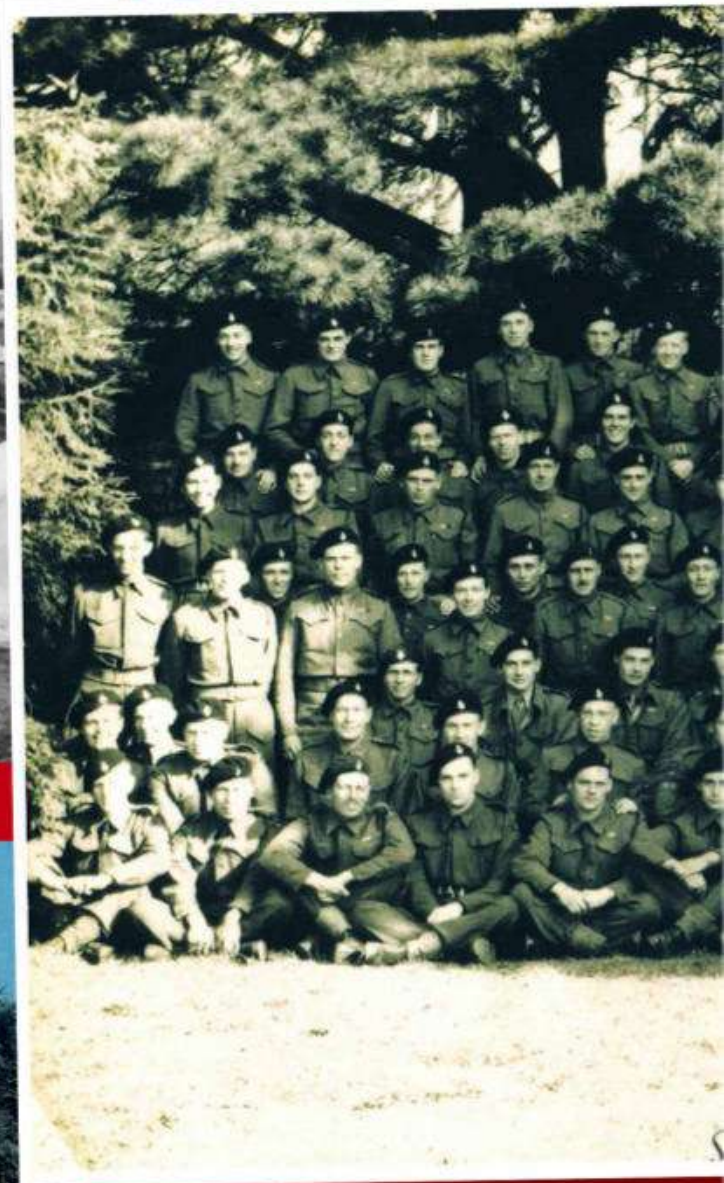
STICKING POINT

A Cromwell tank is pulled to drier ground during Operation Blackcock, January 1945. This campaign to clear German troops from a salient was fought in snow, freezing temperatures and mud



CASUALTY OF WAR

A Panzer IV of the Panzer Lehr division, knocked out in combat, June 1944. The Panzer Lehr provided the stiffest of opposition to the Sherwood Rangers as they fought for Normandy that summer



they had little training. What's more, they were fighting alongside infantry that was entirely new to combat and over whom they had absolutely no control.

This flexible approach to tactics was embraced by the squadron leaders and not least John Semken, who, like Christopherson, had realised that the battlefield was no place for complacency.

One of the principles Semken rammed home to all his crews was the need to fire first and keep firing. The Sherman might have thinner armour than a German Panther or Tiger, but its 75mm main gun was incredibly quick-firing for a tank. "It was absolutely vital that you shoot the first time you see any sort of target," said Semken. "Shoot, shoot and keep shooting, because it may not do him any damage but it will discourage him."

Semken also decided to incorporate the squadron's four Fireflies – Shermans fitted with a high-velocity 17-pounder anti-tank gun – into the Sherman troops. Instead of five troops of three, he made the change to four troops of four, with one Firefly in each. The idea was to use the Shermans to pummel a target and for the Firefly to deliver the killer shot.

Artillery and mortar fire, mines, machine guns, snipers, enemy tanks – danger lurked at every turn

Despite rapidly evolving tactics, communication with the infantry remained an ongoing problem, while the No 19 radio set in the tanks was never as reliable as needed. A tank commander had to have his head out of the turret or else he was effectively blind. He had to communicate with his crew on the intercom and listen to the squadron radio net all the time.

Life and death decisions

In Normandy it was summer time, so the days were long. After being pulled back from the fighting for the night, there was refuelling, rearming and briefings to attend. It was rare to get one's head down before midnight and then they would be up again just a few hours later. It was physically and mentally draining. Troop leaders faced even more responsibility and squadron leaders yet more. There was just so much to think about, so much danger to face. Every decision made might be a matter of life and death. John Semken was so utterly exhausted when first pulled out of the line on 13 June that he slept 12 hours straight through despite artillery firing just a few hundred yards away.



SMILES BEFORE THE STORM

The Sherwood Rangers' C-Squadron in May 1944, a matter of days before the Normandy landings. Between D-Day and VE Day, the Rangers lost 61 per cent of the entire regiment killed or wounded – that's 142 per cent of those in tanks at any one time

As the months rolled on, new challenges presented themselves. Shorter days arrived, but came with a dramatic fall in temperatures and rain, then snow and frost, and then rain again. Geilenkirchen nearly sank in the treacle of mud. Operation Blackcock, which aimed to straighten a salient near the river Roer on the German border in January 1945, was conducted in snow and freezing temperatures. Operation Veritable, the advance to the Rhine, was fought through flooded land and the smashed, bombed-out towns of Cleve and Goch. No sooner were the crews on top of one landscape and set of conditions than they faced another.

It was relentless and the cost was appalling. An armoured regiment had around 700 men, of which 400 were support troops in the supply echelons and around 300 were actually in tanks in the three sabre squadrons – A, B and C – and the recce troop. Between D-Day and VE Day, the Sherwood Rangers lost 148 men killed and 299 wounded, a tally that amounted to 61 per cent of the entire regiment and 142 per cent of the total serving in tanks at any one time. Statistically, the chances of tank crews getting through unscathed were close to zero.

Artillery and mortar fire, mines, panzer-faust strikes, machine guns, snipers, enemy tanks – danger lurked at every turn. Each tank was hit at some point, and whether those in the tank got out without injury, were hit as they escaped, or incinerated, was largely a matter of chance. Inevitably, it soon began to prey on the men's minds. Ernie Leppard, an operator-loader, had to help pull out a fellow operator from the tank in front after it was hit in the final weeks of the war. The man had lost both his legs, while the others were shattered, dead and splayed about the turret. Leppard had joined the previous October. "And at that point," he said, "I'd lost my nerve. I'd been all right up to then, but getting them out..."

A sleigh and a tank

Somehow, however, the Sherwood Rangers kept going, right until the very end, and never seemed to lose their innate humanity, either. The doors continued to revolve as men came and went but some, like Stanley Christopherson, battled on. In the snow and ice of Christmas 1944, he arranged for the men to lay on gifts for the local children in the Dutch border town of Schinnen. One of the officers



INCHING FORWARDS

A Firefly tank on the move in Germany, March 1945. By now, the appalling cost of the battle for Europe was taking a terrible toll on men of the Sherwood Rangers

dressed up as Father Christmas and a sleigh was found and towed by a tank. The men had saved up their sweet and chocolate rations, so these were then distributed. In February 1945, Christopherson noted spotting his first snowdrop.

They ended their war on the morning of 5 May 1945 at the small village of Karlshöfen between Bremen and Hamburg, as German forces surrendered to Montgomery's 21st Army Group. Theirs had been an extraordinary journey and their achievements enormous.

The Sherwood Rangers were just one regiment, but their story can be seen as representative of almost any frontline Allied armoured unit serving in the final 11 months of the war in Europe. What they suffered and yet achieved remains truly awe-inspiring. **H**

James Holland is a broadcaster and author. His latest book, *Brothers in Arms: One Legendary Tank Regiment's Bloody War from D-Day to VE-Day*, was published by Bantam in September. James will be discussing the Sherwood Rangers on our podcast: historyextra.com/podcast

FIVE BIG QUESTIONS ABOUT... Going to church in the Middle Ages

The parish church in Villefranche-de-Conflent.
Encouraging people through the doors on a Sunday
was not as easy as we might assume

From social interaction to confessing your sins,

Nicholas Orme reveals why the church
played such a central role in medieval life

INTERVIEW BY **DAVID MUSGROVE**



1 Why was attending church so important?

// In the Middle Ages, going to church offered a lot more than merely a way of connecting with God. Christianity was not only a religion, but an entire worldview that sought to explain a great deal more than people's relationship with God. Church-going encompassed ethics, telling you how you should behave, and entire areas of study that we would now separate off as science, sociology or politics. Even history was a part of it; medieval histories of the world took a lot from the Bible.

The importance of the church in the lives of medieval people went far beyond theology. In fact, the church fulfilled a lot of functions which we would now look to the government to carry out. This comprised a huge infrastructure to deal with things like education, morality and charity in the parish.

It also played a valuable social role. Nowadays, there are plenty of other things you could be doing on a Sunday morning, but imagine living in a scattered rural hamlet in the Middle Ages. You might not encounter many people, and so the church offered a wonderful opportunity to meet others. It was a place where you could organise your own social group. Hence you saw the emergence of groups formed from, for example, the young men, wives or "maidens" of the local parish.

Medieval churches gave
people the opportunity to
socialise as well as worship



2 Were people forced to attend?

// In theory, everybody was meant to be in church on Sundays and festival days, of which there were about 40–50 annually. That meant that on at least 90 days of the year, you would be expected to be present for at least the morning service.

The actual levels of attendance tell a more complicated story, though. There was a recognition that certain people could acceptably be absent. These included children, as well as shepherds or fishermen, who were not expected to be in church if their work demanded otherwise. Nor were servants required to attend. The rich wanted to return home after church and find their dinner ready, and somebody had to make that dinner.

There were certainly inducements to go to church, but who was going to *make* you go? While pious people, of course, needed no encouragement,

there were others who would rather stay at home, lying in bed or getting on with some work. The church couldn't impose 100 per cent attendance, because making somebody go to church was a tricky business.

The priest could reprimand them, or refuse to hear their confession and decline to give them communion. If this failed, they could report them to the church court. But it was a cumbersome process and it was difficult to enforce. The people who ended up in the church courts were generally those who were already unpopular in the community or antisocial in other ways.

And so there was always a proportion of people in the parish who didn't often go to church. You'd struggle to get away with *never* going, but you could get away with poor attendance to a certain extent.



A religious ceremony in a 15th-century illumination. Attendees were not expected to follow proceedings, instead conducting their own prayers

3 What actually happened during the service?

Services were conducted in Latin, apart from three or four points when the vernacular was used. They were spoken and sung in the chancel, which was separated from the nave by a screen, meaning that the services were conducted quite a long way away from the congregation.

Unlike in most modern services, people were not expected to follow the service or respond to anything. That was done by the parish clerk. Instead, it was like watching a modern concert – you were part of the experience spiritually, not performing in it. During the service, the congrega-

tion might hold a prayer book or a rosary, and say prayers to themselves, meaning there was a subdued murmur of voices running throughout.

Before the introduction of pews in the 14th and 15th centuries, there weren't many seats except those for the nobility and gentry. A person might bring a stool to sit on, but most of the congregation would stand.

Each family in the parish donated a loaf of bread in turn, which was then blessed by the priest. At the end of the service, chunks would be broken off and given out. That was, in effect, communion.

4 What did churches smell and sound like?

You'd be hit with a heady waft of damp, candle smoke and incense, mixed, of course, with the smells emanating from the congregation. Added to that was the smell of decaying bodies, due to burials being allowed inside churches.

As for sound, church builders understood acoustics principles and some churches were designed with sound projection in mind. But the ability to hear a service was entirely dependent on the carrying power of the human voice, and a person at the back of a large church wouldn't be able to hear so well. The most solemn part of Mass – the prayer of consecration or canon – would be whispered by the priest in an intentionally low voice because it was so holy. At that point, the church would suddenly fall silent. Worship

was not always about sound; it was also about the silence.

Just as there was a huge difference in the size and decoration of churches, music would vary enormously. Wealthy churches with a choir might have lots of elaborate music such as the Litany – generally sung in different parts – which began to appear in top rate cathedrals and royal chapels in the 15th century. Parish churches would have more basic plainsong, sung in unison. There may have been only one priest singing his plainsong unaccompanied, and so the congregation would be in his hands entirely.

Choral singing (as seen in this 14th-century drawing) was a staple of more elite church services



5 How did confession work?

From 1215 onwards, the Catholic church required everyone to go to confession at least once a year, usually during Lent.

The person confessing would kneel, not looking directly at the priest. The priest sat in a chair with his hood pulled over his head to conceal his face.

Although the clergy were supposed to be celibate, medieval people were worried about untoward things going on between priests and women. As a result the confession had to take place in a public space, such as the nave – and confession booths weren't invented until the 16th century.

The process of taking everyone's confession would have placed a considerable extra burden on most churches. They already had morning and afternoon services, so there was only a small window of time available. An average parish had around 250 adults, which was quite a lot of people to spend time speaking to. As such, it seems likely that the average annual confession was a quick trot through the material, lasting 15–20 minutes. **H**



A woman seeks spiritual guidance in a 15th-century tapestry. From 1215 onwards, everyone was expected to attend an annual confession

Nicholas Orme is the author of *Going to Church in Medieval England* (Yale, 2021). You can listen to a longer version of this interview at [historyextra.com/medieval-churches](https://www.historyextra.com/medieval-churches)

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BOOKS

SECOND WORLD WAR

“Andrew Lownie reveals Edward VIII as an active and culpable collaborator”

Sarah Gristwood on a new profile of the Duke of Windsor's involvement in Nazi schemes > page 81



SOCIAL

// These ‘witches’ often appear as stock figures: bogeywomen who killed their neighbours and worshipped the devil //

Marion Gibson on a new account of a 17th-century witchcraft trial > page 78

RELIGION

“Thus began a process of double-dealing, backstabbing and bribery that dragged on for months”

Catherine Fletcher enjoys a look at the drama of a 16th-century papal election > page 80

IDEAS

“Because we’re so used to using indexes, we rarely pause to think how lost we’d be without them”

Henry Hitchings on a celebration of centuries of the humble referencing system > page 82

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Clare Jackson discusses her new take on 17th-century England > page 74



INTERVIEW / CLARE JACKSON

"England was seen as a pariah state, ruled by regicidal rebels who'd publicly executed their king"

DR CLARE JACKSON speaks to Ellie Cawthorne about her new account of one of the most turbulent, anxious and insecure periods of English history

ON THE
HistoryExtra
PODCAST

Ellie Cawthorne: *Devil-Land* looks at England from 1588 to 1688. Why do you think this is such a fascinating 100-year period of English history?

Dr Clare Jackson: Partly because so much happened: you get a feeling that events were unfolding at a dizzying speed that even contemporaries had difficulty getting their heads around. Throughout the book I tried to put myself in their position – to imagine how it would feel to not know who might be on the throne this time next year, or what sort of religious settlement might be in place. So much was precarious in the 17th century and so much was up for grabs.

As the period opened, England was a country whose dynastic future was uncertain, to put it mildly. Elizabeth I made discussion of her successor a capital crime. That was a moment of great anxiety because there were lots of potential contenders, all of whom came with their own dynastic and religious baggage. There were at least 10 claimants who brought with them the opportunity – or horror, depending on your viewpoint – of England being re-Catholicised. At any point in the 1580s, from the Armada onwards, there was always a fear that England might be plunged immediately into a big continental war of succession.

The geopolitical landscape was fast-changing. The counter-reformation was making large gains on the continent, and in the first half of the 17th century, Europe was convulsed by the Thirty Years' War. In the 1640s, England itself was plunged into bloody revolution, leading to the public execution of its monarch, Charles I, and the only

11 years in the country's history when it's been a republic. Although today we look back on "the interregnum" as an anomaly book-marked between two periods of monarchy, it wouldn't have seemed as reassuringly temporary as that to contemporaries. They didn't know it wasn't to last. And the period ended with the Glorious Revolution – a foreign invasion, backed by armed support from the Netherlands.

To me, it's both a fascinating but also quite a terrifying 100 years in England's history.

You describe this as an intensely insecure time. What were the most gnawing anxieties of the age?

Throughout this period, there was a sense of England being a very young Protestant nation, which many people would regard as only half-reformed. Its religious destiny

wasn't clear, and there were plenty of Puritan elements who wished to pursue the Reformation more fully. But there were also entrenched remnants of the Catholic church. The country's religious identity was seen as under constant threat, whether from its own rulers with their suspect Catholic proclivities and their Catholic spouses, an internal fifth column, or an aggressive neighbour like France's Louis XIV.

There was a very identifiable fear of popish encirclement or a popish plot. At the start of the period, Mary, Queen of Scots was executed by Elizabeth I for fomenting Catholic conspiracies. A whole series of popish plots followed, into which contemporaries could very readily read recurrent manifestations – from Guy Fawkes' gunpowder plot, to the Irish rebellion in 1641 and the "popish plot" in the 1670s. And if one thinks about a period like the mid-1660s, there was plentiful scope for paranoia and fear. London experienced a huge plague and then one of the largest fires in its history. Immediately, blame for that fire was laid at the door of foreign Catholics, to which Charles II responded: "No, it's the wind, it's been a hot, dry summer." But what's striking is the readiness of contemporaries to fit everyday disasters into a larger narrative of either providential deliverance or near-Catholic takeover.

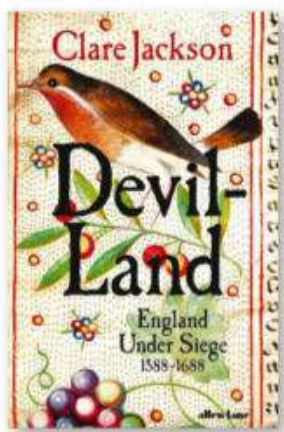
Another of the recurrent fears was of imminent foreign invasion. The fear that the Isle of Wight, Margate or any coastal port might one day become a landing site for an invasion was very palpable. And that fear didn't go away with the defeat of the Spanish Armada. There were smaller Armadas in the 1590s, and a constant anxiety about continental Europe only being half-a-day's sail away.

The fear of Catholic encirclement wasn't a threat posed only by central Europe – it could also come through the "side door", Ireland, or the "back door", Scotland, which traditionally had an alliance with France. Intensifying these concerns, England didn't have a standing army. It relied on local militias and other forms of defence. So England being able to defend its interests was something that couldn't be taken for granted.

Did these anxieties also trickle down to ordinary people?

One of the most interesting themes of this period is the rise of news. It's the time in which printed newspapers as we would recognise them make their way into Britain. It's also the heyday of polemical pamphlet publishing. Some of this was clearly "fake news", rumour and speculation, but some was real and accurate. This was still a world in which news often arrived with certain delays. People were always itching after what was new, but this emerging interest in news also encouraged a sense of paranoia and uncertainty.

London at this time was one of the biggest cities in Europe, with a highly literate populace. Something that foreign diplomats often mention is that this was a city in which everybody wanted to talk



Devil-Land:
England Under
Siege 1588–1688
by Clare Jackson
(Allen Lane,
688 pages, £35)



PROFILE

Clare Jackson is senior tutor of Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge. She has presented BBC documentaries on the Stuart dynasty and her previous books include *Charles II* for the Penguin Monarchs series and *Restoration Scotland 1660–1690* (Boydell)

PHOTOGRAPH BY
CAROLINE MARDON



Stuart sovereign King Charles I, as depicted by Dutch painter Daniel Mytens the Elder in 1631. “There’s an interesting irony that while Charles I’s accession was never disputed, he was the one who ended up on the scaffold,” says Clare Jackson

politics. The watermen that rowed you across the Thames had their own views on political crises of the day. And out in the “provinces” it was anything but parochial. Political information was disseminated from the pulpit, local assizes or market crosses.

The book is called *Devil-land* – where does that name come from?

“Duyvel-landt” is what the Dutch called England in the mid-17th century. It partly draws on a medieval folk concept belief that Englishmen had tails. This idea had been dispelled by the mid-17th century, but there were many abroad who nonetheless believed that the English had indeed become devils. “Duyvel-landt” was playing on a Latin pun *Angli*, that the English could be seen as angelic. But by the mid-17th century they had become *Diaboli* – regicidal rebels who’d overthrown their monarchy and publicly executed their king. They were seen as a pariah state with aggressive foreign ambitions.

You draw on foreign perspectives throughout the book. What can we learn about 17th-century England from looking at how it was viewed by foreign powers?

When I was working on BBC documentaries on the Stuarts, it brought home the extent to which the Stuarts were really a foreign, imported dynasty – they were Scottish. Each Stuart monarch had a foreign consort, whether it was Anna of Denmark, Henrietta Maria, or Catherine of Braganza, all of whom had their own confessional Catholic ties or foreign dynastic links. There was a lot about the Stuart century that doesn’t seem traditionally English – whether that’s the continental baroque décor in Whitehall’s Banqueting House, or the fact that Charles I spent six months as prince of Wales wooing the infanta at the Spanish court in Madrid. I was interested in the ways in which the English increasingly began to suspect the Stuart dynasty could not always be trusted to act in the country’s national interests.

What were England’s most significant foreign relationships during this era?

One of the most interesting things is the extent to which those alliances varied. At points they were self-contradictory in a way that was really quite impossible for many diplomats to fathom. At one point in the 1670s, Charles II was receiving secret financial subsidies from Louis XIV’s court while his parliament was voting to declare war on France. That’s either diplomatic ineptitude of the highest degree, or a

// The foreign response to the regicide was one of universal horror – confirmation of England being “Devil-Land”. The English were out of control and could not be trusted //

very calculated stratagem for keeping various options open.

One of the dilemmas for 17th-century England was how best to preserve Protestantism when potentially encircled by Catholic states. But there was also a question of how to position England’s foreign relations when the big superpowers of the age – Spain and France – were also Catholic countries. On the other hand, it made confessional sense to maintain an alliance with the Protestant Dutch, but they were England’s greatest commercial competitors. So it was a very fluctuating picture, complicated again by the Stuarts’ own confessional and dynastic allegiances.

You also emphasise the international context in the Civil War. Why have you chosen to do so?

Contemporaries certainly saw the Civil War of the 1640s within the wider context of continental Europe being convulsed by confessional war through the 1630s. Some people felt that Charles I had been right to keep England out of this great conflagration on the continent that was laying waste to so much territory. But then, as some historians have argued, you could say that England ended up convulsed by its own “wars of religion” in the 1640s.

Initially, there was a lot of continental expertise deployed in the Civil War. The forces of the Scottish Covenanting army, for example, were led by veterans with continental experience, who had served overseas in the armies of Gustavus Adolphus in Sweden and elsewhere.

Once the dynamic started to shift in favour of parliament, the Cromwellian vision of the New Model Army was of it not being made up of foreign strangers, but rather an English army fighting for England’s interest and seeking a settlement with Charles that only extended to England. That was reflected in the way in which it was framed as an English decision to put Charles I on trial and an English decision to execute him. The king’s death was much to the horror of the Scots, even those who had fought against him.

Was the foreign response to the regicide one of universal horror?

Yes, there was universal horror in 1649. People saw the regicide as confirmation of England being “Devil-Land”. It was not only that the monarch had been executed, but the fact that the execution was both public and ceremonial. Continental audiences were used to monarchs being assassinated by a lone extremist, but the idea that you could try and clothe what they essentially saw as sacrilegious murder in a judicial disguise was utterly unacceptable. What also underlined the horror was a sense that this was something that the English political nation did. It was, after all, Elizabeth I who put Charles’s grandmother Mary, Queen of Scots on trial and ordered her execution, even though she was (as she saw it) a divinely ordained monarch, a former queen consort in France and queen of Scotland. So there was a sense, particularly in France, that it wasn’t surprising the English would do something like this, as they were a people who were out of control and could not be trusted.

How would you characterise the people’s religious temperament?

Very mixed: there was a wide spectrum of religious opinion in Britain



War on the doorstep

While England avoided foreign military engagements on the scale witnessed here at the battle of Fleurus (1622), the civil wars of the 1640s can be viewed within the wider confessional context of the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), says Clare Jackson

and Ireland. Another challenge the Stuarts faced was ruling a multiple monarchy with different religious complexions in each of its states. England had a majority episcopalian population with pockets of support for both alternate Puritan models and Catholic recusancy. Scotland had a very different religious complexion, with greater support for further reformation along Presbyterian lines, while Ireland had a majority Catholic population. And it was always the case that a minority element in each country wanted their own country to follow the path of one of the other Stuart states. That's an almost impossible inheritance for any monarch to be able to rule satisfactorily.

What do you see as some of the defining features of governance in this period?

One intractable problem for the Stuarts was a lack of crown finance. Throughout the period, until what we now call the "Financial Revolution" in the 1690s, all the Stuarts suffered from a difficulty in raising money on the scale of their European counterparts. For all of the language James VI and I used about leading a great Protestant crusade on the continent, he simply didn't have the military or financial resources to do it, and successive parliaments were reluctant to vote for the sums of money that would be required.

One thing that changed, however, was parliament. People went to war in the name of parliament in the mid-17th century, but parliament as an institution didn't meet every year again until after 1689. In this period, parliament was an "event", not an "institution", and when it was prorogued for partisan reasons or dissolved, contemporaries usually didn't know when it would meet again.

Which monarchs did the best job at navigating this unstable situation? And which did the worst?

There's an interesting irony that the monarchs who had a difficult time

coming to the throne or whose accession was disputed were the ones who most often lasted. I'm thinking of James VI and I, who spent the 1590s looking at the English throne, trying to assert his right to succeed Elizabeth in a way that wouldn't unleash a large European war. And yet when he came to the throne, he managed to keep hold of it, and eventually died in his bed of natural causes. Meanwhile Charles I's accession was never disputed, but he was the one who ended up on the scaffold.

What was different about England in 1688 compared to a century earlier?

It's hard not to be swayed by hindsight – about the stability that we now know followed in the Georgian era. But I'm not sure it was a fundamentally different place. In 1688 nothing could be taken for certain, and the 1690s were a pretty terrifying period to live through. I think that the underlying insecurity and uncertainty about the future that characterised this century were still there. For example, anxieties surrounding the succession persisted well beyond Queen Anne's death in 1714. The decision to place the succession in the Hanoverian line was an attempt again to secure England's Protestant settlement as much as possible against Catholic overthrow or foreign intervention.

However, perhaps some of the most radical changes that occurred in this century were in the ideological sphere. There was a much more sophisticated level of public debate and clearer divisions of partisan allegiances by the second half of the 17th century. I'm not saying that royalist and parliamentary divisions map directly onto Tory and Whig party affiliations, but the idea of institutionalising political conflict had become more common. And the Civil War had spawned unnervingly radical ideas that couldn't be unthought. **H**

MORE FROM US

Listen to an extended version of this interview with Clare Jackson on our **podcast** at [historyextra.com/podcast](https://www.historyextra.com/podcast)



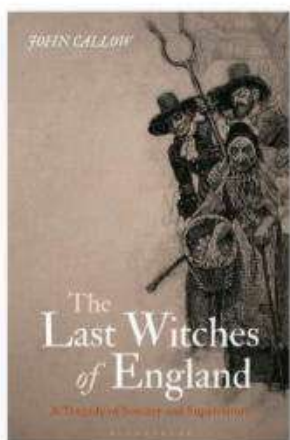
A familiar scene?

A witch feeds her familiars her own blood in the 1579 pamphlet *A Rehearsal Both Strange and True*. John Callow's book shines a light on the lives of three women accused of witchcraft in 17th-century Devon

SOCIAL

Dark forces

MARION GIBSON praises a retelling of a 17th-century witchcraft trial that never loses sight of the women at its heart, nor the social and economic factors that contributed to their plight



The Last Witches of England: A Tragedy of Sorcery and Superstition

by John Callow
Bloomsbury,
352 pages, £25

John Callow's history of a witchcraft case in late 17th-century

England offers the compelling, lively and empathetic stories of three women charged in the north Devon town of Bideford. Often, these "witches" appear in historical accounts as stock figures: bogeywomen said to have killed their neighbours and worshipped the devil. But the best thing about *The Last Witches of England* – so called as they are labelled the last people to be hanged for

witchcraft in England – is the partial biographical recovery of the three women: Temperance Lloyd, Susanna Edwards and Mary Trembles.

The prime suspect was Lloyd, twice charged with witchcraft in the 1670s and again in 1682. Instead of just repeating the stories of her accusers, Callow fills out her background as a real, ordinary woman. His research links Lloyd persuasively to an influx of Welsh miners into Bideford in the mid-17th century, coming to mine coal to power the local pottery industry and munitions workshops. In the 1640s, Temperance Jones, as she was called, married a Rhys Lloyd, who seemed to have left by the 1660s when she began to receive welfare payments from the town authorities. Listed as a "wife" and not a "widow", Lloyd was scandalously abandoned and suspected of prostitution. It was a steep fall for a woman with such a Puritan

Christian name. From this beginning, Callow then unfolds the tragedy of the accusations made against her.

The second suspect, Susanna Edwards, was equally unfortunate. The illegitimate daughter of a single mother, she, like Lloyd, married into a Welsh family. Widowed in the 1660s, she was left vulnerable and had already begun to receive welfare payments. And so Edwards joined Lloyd in the dismal world of proto-universal credit, pleading with the Bideford authorities for a few extra pence to tide her over a hard time.

Mary Trembles, the final suspect, was even poorer. Her parents had trudged the north Devon lanes before her looking for work and charity, and both had received welfare in the 1660s. Their deaths left their unmarried daughter alone and without a sustainable income. Callow suggests that her surname has its origins in what is now Northern Ireland,

and that she might have been victimised as an “Irish beggar”. A scapegoated outsider, Trembles joined the other two women in the dock in 1682.

Callow’s careful research allows readers to better understand their plight and consider why they were accused. They stood out for their poverty, suspicion of immoral earnings, and dependency on charity. Their situation was bad in the 1660s, and got worse. An economic crisis resulted in shrinking amounts of welfare paid, which, Callow suggests, pushed the three women into desperate attempts to enforce charity from neighbours. There were documented approaches to unwilling townspeople, along with their angry responses to those who refused to spare them a coin or a little tobacco. As Bideford was a port town full of lonely sailors, the women may have resorted to prostitution, too.

Callow insightfully reconstructs the landscape and economy of Bideford to frame these exchanges. He describes how tolls on the town bridge split the community, for example, and how the bridge itself created chokepoints where beggars congregated. Here, they were a visible “problem”, and conflicts over begging, payment and gifts fed into the witchcraft accusations.

The book traces the accusations in detail and attempts to centre the women. It’s no easy task, with a story convoluted by claim and counter-claim and made more difficult to piece together due to missing information. There is also the need to explain key contexts: the Civil War, demonological theory, the market for newspapers and ballads, and so on. These occupy sections of the book’s seven central chapters, as well as the three remaining ones. Sometimes, different choices might have been made in Callow’s balance between immersion and analysis, but the throughline is always clear and the book is a pleasure to read throughout.

Occasionally, the book’s deductions are arguable: such as the possible illegitimacies inferred from a surname, or a suggestion that the accused were marked out by connections with Ireland. But these deductions are fairly put forward as suggestions, and Callow is scrupulously honest about making any assumption. Some of his reconstructions from plausible clues are enticing. The idea, for instance, that when Susanna Edwards’ name appears just above that of Temperance Lloyd in a 1682 list of welfare recipients, the two women had been queueing together to receive their paltry pennies. Moments like these give the book a thrilling immediacy.

Knowing more about the accused women helps unpick some of the judgments made about them by their hostile neighbours and too often accepted by historians as “fact”.

Lloyd was described as being about 70 years old at the time of her trial, for example, and as a cruel, lewd harridan. The truth was that she was probably in her 40s at the time the first allegations were made against her. It was not always elderly women who were targeted as witches, we learn.

Lloyd came from a godly family and had a respectable past as a wife and mother. Why then, Callow asks, would she be imagined as an elderly, crazy, lustful devil-worshipper?

// They stood out for their poverty, suspicion of immoral earnings and dependency on charity. Their situation was bad in the 1660s, and got worse //

Because, as the research reveals, her life had been hard, and had ground her down into ill-health, fury and tattered looks. She was likely driven by hunger into selling whatever she could, including herself, swearing at her enemies and scorning the church establishment. It is a plausible reading of what we know about Lloyd, and Callow rightly sympathises with her.

Sources for understanding the lives and deaths of the Bideford “witches” are few, but Callow has done a fine job in discovering and interpreting those that do exist. He tells the detailed story with screenplay-like flourish and gives readers a wider history of the town of Bideford as context. He then concludes by telling readers about the afterlives of the witch trial as news, exhibit and drama, and speculates as to what the women’s accusations meant in 17th-century Bideford and in wider England, then and now.

Ultimately, there is no plain explanation for the witchcraft accusations of 1682, but then acts of evil never have a simple origin. *The Last Witches of England* faces that fact and marshals an intriguing story around new research on the case. **H**

.....
Marion Gibson is professor of history at the University of Exeter, and author of books including *Witchcraft: The Basics* (Routledge, 2018)

MORE FROM US

Marion Gibson is among the contributors to our podcast series **Salem: Investigating the Witch Trials**, available from Apple Podcasts at <https://apple.co/3irlHpF>

AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST

Eric Berkowitz on the long history of censorship

“What is forbidden today will often become the standard tomorrow – the most stark example being the Tyndale Bible back in the 16th century. William Tyndale met a terribly violent death but, very soon after, his work became the basis for the King James Bible itself.”



Annie Garthwaite on Cecily Neville, Duchess of York

“We tend to have this impression of medieval women as having very little power or agency, and spending most of their time doing embroidery and waiting for a knight in shining armour to ride along. But it really wasn’t like that – women of Cecily of York’s status would have wielded quite considerable power and responsibility in their own right. These were not meek women. They were women who understood business, understood the law and understood politics.”



Margalit Fox on an unusual escape plot hatched by First World War PoWs

“If I were to make the elevator pitch for the story of my book, it would go like this: in the depths of the First World War, two handsome young British officers escaped from a remote Turkish prisoner of war camp by means of a ouija board. If I were to make that pitch to a producer or an editor, he or she would think that I had lost my marbles – yet that is exactly what happened in this real-life story.”



RELIGION

Popish plotting

CATHERINE FLETCHER rates an entertaining book that heads behind the closed doors of an acrimonious 16th-century papal election to tell the story of the man at its centre



**Conclave 1559:
The Story of a
Papal Election**
by Mary Hollingsworth
Head of Zeus, 320 pages, £25

This follow-up to 2004's critically acclaimed *The Cardinal's Hat* sees the return of the

16th-century cardinal Ippolito d'Este, as we follow him through the machinations of a papal election. It chronicles the events of 1559, an auspicious year in Europe. War-weary Spain and France had temporarily settled their differences in the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis after more than six decades of intermittent fighting.

When Pope Paul IV died in August of that year, he had few mourners: indeed, rioters celebrated by decapitating his statue and burning down the Inquisition building. A hardliner, the pope had exiled Ippolito for simony – the act of buying or selling religious roles or items. It was a particularly ungrateful move, given that Ippolito's faction had supported his election. After the pope's death, Ippolito was charged with ensuring French interests were represented in the conclave. He had made his career with French patronage, becoming one of the richest members of the College of Cardinals. Now he was expected to deliver.

When the cardinals met in August 1559, the votes were split three ways: Ippolito led a group allied to France; Cardinal Sforza, one allied to Spain; and Paul IV's nephew, Cardinal Carafa, a cluster owing their promotions to the late pope. With a two-thirds majority needed, the numbers were tight. Two factions united might prove victorious, but such were the religious divisions, personality clashes and cross-cutting alliances between Italian dynastic families that no group could guarantee its vote. Thus began a process of horse-trading, double-dealing, backstabbing and bribery that dragged on for months.

Conclave 1559 brings to life not only the political dimension of these machinations, but their fascinating material detail. The Sistine Chapel and adjoining rooms were



Schisms and spoils Cardinals gather in the Sistine Chapel for a papal conclave, 2013. A new book chronicles the bribery and backstabbing of the process in 1559, and the role of Ippolito d'Este (right)

converted into accommodation filled with little wooden cubicles draped with rich fabric. Officially, the cardinals were permitted two servants, but unauthorised visitors to the conclave – in which electors were meant to be locked away from the outside world – proved a continual problem.

The Spanish ambassador intervened first, initially by climbing in through windows and then via holes “deliberately chiselled into the walls behind the cubicles”. While the French were somewhat more circumspect, such was the breakdown of order that the papal official responsible for ceremonies issued more than

one tirade against the cardinals' misconduct, and imposed a curfew of 11.30pm.

It was not all hardship. Ippolito enjoyed fine dining, arranging for the delivery of dishes from his private palace, hiring a French pastry chef, and using silver plates and crystal glasses. The luxuries must have palled, however, and as autumn turned to winter, fur linings for robes had to be distributed. The only sources of heating were risky braziers. Twelve weeks into the deadlock, the smell was so rancid that a special team of cleaners was sent in.

Ippolito's own situation was high-stakes: his conflict with Paul IV had led to significant financial losses. He needed a friendly pope. He himself might even be a candidate. Mary Hollingsworth is an entertaining guide through Ippolito's efforts and the election – as the cardinals struggled to compromise – and out the other side when the victorious candidate tackled the religious conflict growing across Europe. **H**

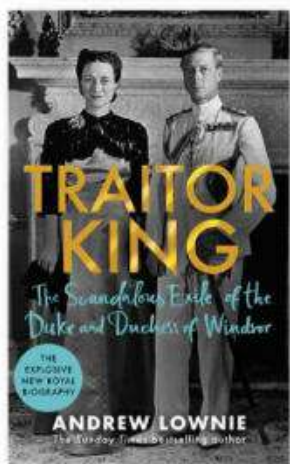
Catherine Fletcher is the author of *The Beauty and the Terror: An Alternative History of the Italian Renaissance* (Bodley Head, 2020)

// The only sources of heating were risky braziers. Twelve weeks into the deadlock, the smell was so rancid that a special team of cleaners was sent in //

ROYAL

The duke of duplicity

SARAH GRISTWOOD on a new profile of Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson that casts them in a distinctly unflattering light



Traitor King: The Scandalous Exile of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor

by Andrew Lownie
Blink, 352 pages, £25

The Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson, can

be hard to see clearly. Looming over their controversial figures are clouds of confusion: were they fools for love or feeble faces of the British monarchy? Those clouds only grow more obscure every time a new royal couple seems to be juggling the conflicting demands of love and duty.

The official position – that, by stepping away from the demands of his nation, the duke set himself beyond the pale – sowed the seeds of its own revision, positioning this particular duke and duchess as victims of a repressive monarchical establishment. Now Andrew Lownie sets out to revise the revisionists, and he does so convincingly.

His book begins where others might leave off, on the eve of the abdication, and he portrays a couple who, far from resigning themselves to a polite and pathetic retirement, made a sustained attempt to continue

to steer world affairs. It is impossible not to be convinced by the evidence Lownie produces, or fail to share his relief that the duke and duchess did not succeed.

Suspicion about Edward's attitude towards Nazi Germany is nothing new: witness the FBI reports on the couple's wartime activities, or the interest triggered by the Marburg Files. These, discovered by US soldiers in Germany at the end of the Second World War, contained details of "Operation Willi", a plot to persuade the duke, with Wallis beside him, to be reinstated on the British throne as the Nazis' puppet king.

These documents have, of course, already been explored. But Lownie takes the charge further, suggesting in effect that no persuasion was necessary. It has hitherto been possible to envisage a distinction between the Nazis' proven desire to involve Windsor in their plans, and readiness on his part to comply with them. This view would see him as naive, perhaps self-serving, but essentially betrayed into imprudence only by his hatred of war. Lownie reveals Edward not as a dupe of the Nazis, but an active and culpable collaborator, still in treacherous contact with the Germans even as the Battle of Britain raged. The title of his book makes a bold claim, and one he is prepared to back with extensive new research.

The list of individuals interviewed and archives consulted is formidable. The more impressive, then, that this is a wonderfully readable and succinct story. Alongside the political concerns of the British establishment (and Churchill's complicity in the partial suppression of the Marburg Files) runs riveting detail about the sheer awfulness, the anomie, of the Windsors' postwar life in exile, including his sexual submissiveness and her alleged affairs. Lownie portrays a duke whose charm was hugely outweighed by his narcissism, dishonesty, and enduring anti-Semitism. The duchess gets less space, yet emerges with no more credit. The indictment is all the more chilling for the fact that, until the last pages, Lownie abstains from editorialising. But then, the facts as he presents them speak for themselves. ■



A Nazi puppet? Wallis Simpson and Edward VIII greet Adolf Hitler in Berlin, 1937, but was the duke, as Lownie claims, an "active and culpable collaborator"?

Sarah Gristwood is a historian and author whose latest book is *The Tudors in Love* (Oneworld, 2021)

YOU RECOMMEND

We asked our Twitter followers to share their book suggestions as the UK marks Black History Month

@GreenBlueAn

David Olusoga's *Black and British: A Forgotten History* is fascinating, and was a real eye opener for me.

@BGUHistory

Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867 [by Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland and Jane Rendall] was a benchmark for demonstrating the importance of intersectional approaches to big political history questions.

@Merlinia12

Not history in the strictest of senses, but Lemn Sissay's [pictured] *My Name Is Why* [an account of his time in foster homes and quest for his Ethiopian identity].

@mrbwteach

Black Tudors: The Untold Story [the stories of 10 Africans living in Tudor and Stuart England] by Miranda Kaufmann.

@juliaesdietz

All that She Carried: The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a Black Family Keepsake [about a single object passed down through three generations of black women, starting with an enslaved woman called Rose] by Tiya Miles.

@Sarahbu72

As a historian who knew nothing about the topic, Ayana D Byrd and Lori L Tharps' *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America* was truly educational.

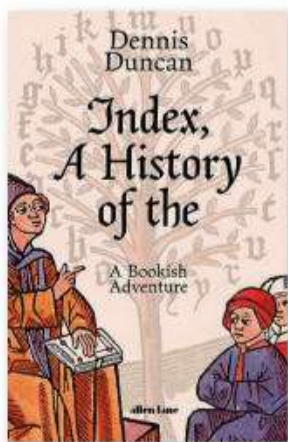
@Wingman20351752

The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu: And Their Race to Save the World's Most Precious Manuscripts by Joshua Hammer; or *Toussaint Louverture: A Revolutionary Life* by Philippe Girard; or *The Stolen Prince: Gannibal, Adopted Son of Peter the Great, Great-Grandfather of Alexander Pushkin, and Europe's First Black Intellectual* by Hugh Barnes; or *Pio Pico: The Last Governor of Mexican California* by Carlos Manuel Salomon.



Index, positive review of, p82

HENRY HITCHINGS enjoys an engaging look at the key roles that the humble index has played across eight centuries of literary and scholarly endeavour



Index, a History of the
by Dennis Duncan
Allen Lane, 352 pages, £20

When did you last consult an index? I looked at one an hour ago to find a recipe for an unseasonal mushroom

casserole, and another an hour earlier while hunting for juicy bits in a biography of Charles de Gaulle. But because we are so used to having access to indexes, we rarely pause to think how lost we'd be without them.

Dennis Duncan, a lecturer in English at University College London, laments this blasé attitude. His account of this apparently innocuous piece of textual apparatus shows how, besides serving as a navigational tool, it can also be a literary performance in its own right. The index is sometimes a vehicle for wit or a chance for an interloper to stealthily alter the emphasis of a publication. Hence 19th-century Whig grandee Lord Macaulay's famous request: "Let no damned Tory index my History."

The index has existed since the 13th century, emerging simultaneously in Paris and Oxford. Since then, as Duncan explains, its development has illuminated shifts in reading habits. Early on, a major factor was the growth of universities, in which students learned the art of selective rather than devotional reading. Later changes resulted from the mass production of Bibles, the advent of page numbers, and the rise of the scientific journal. In recent memory, computing has ushered in an age of searchable electronic books and social media hashtags. If we google something, we're searching not the world wide web, but Google's index of it.

Duncan's approach is rigorously scholarly, as befits someone whose academic specialism is French avant-garde literature. But his tone is engaging and he serves up plenty of amusing titbits: the first volume published by the short-lived Index Society had no index, for instance, and, in the late 17th century, a writer padding their work with gratuitous quotations was known as an "index-raker".



Gathering thoughts A monk consults a book in a late 13th-century Italian fresco. Dennis Duncan charts the emergence of the index in that century, and the part indexers have played in the organisation of knowledge

Novels with indexes particularly intrigue Duncan. Classic examples, such as Virginia Woolf's 1928 *Orlando: A Biography* and Vladimir Nabokov's 1962 *Pale Fire*, deploy them as a playful means of blurring the boundary between fiction and non-fiction. Yet when 18th-century English writer Samuel Richardson added an index to an expanded edition of his novel *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady* in 1751, his aim was to help readers locate its "moral and instructive sentiments". One critic saw this as a sign of "violent literary vanity".

// The business of compiling indexes has never been glamorous. The list of specialist indexers to have achieved fame is shorter than a mayfly's dream //

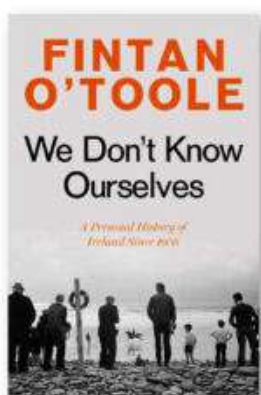
Even when practised by the likes of Woolf and Lewis Carroll, the business of compiling indexes has never been glamorous, and the list of specialist indexers to have achieved fame is shorter than a mayfly's dream. Often such practitioners are anonymous (although Duncan credits the British indexer Paula Clarke Bain for her classy contribution to his book), and it's normal to stereotype them as pedants or drudges. But the role calls for imagination as well as precision: the indexer must be a deep reader, tracking personalities across a text, labelling ideas, and anticipating the different ways in which it will eventually be used.

As Duncan poignantly observes, for as long as the old-fashioned paper-and-ink book remains "the dominant symbol of our intellectual endeavours", enriching the mind will involve navigating printed matter – and the index will be our compass. **H**

Henry Hitchings is an author, reviewer and critic, whose books include *The World in Thirty-Eight Chapters* or *Dr Johnson's Guide to Life* (Macmillan, 2018)

Church and state

CORMAC Ó GRÁDA recommends a biographical, idiosyncratic history of 20th-century Ireland from one of the nation's leading writers and critics



We Don't Know Ourselves: A Personal History of Ireland Since 1958

by Fintan O'Toole

Head of Zeus, 624 pages, £25

Prominent Irish intellectual Fintan O'Toole's latest book merges

cameos from a self-proclaimed "boring" life with events, people and changes in Ireland at large over the past six decades. In 2013, the Royal Irish Academy commissioned O'Toole to write *A History of Ireland in 100 Objects*, and *We Don't Know Ourselves* has a similar feel, although here the past is painted mainly through villains, victims, eccentrics and scandals.

O'Toole uses these cameos as metaphors. He remarks, for instance, that the church in which he served mass in his youth has become part of "Ireland's religious rustbelt", and recalls earnestly singing a rebel song at a family gathering around the time of Bloody Sunday in 1972, and shouting "Up the IRA" at Taoiseach Jack Lynch a few months later, reflecting the broader impact of that atrocity at the time. A disturbing story about O'Toole's father's "most private self, the marks on his skull and inside his head" is about something much bigger: an oppressive

regime of industrial schools, mother and baby homes, and mental hospitals.

Growing up in Crumlin, a working-class suburb of Dublin, during the 1960s, O'Toole was one of five children of a bus conductor and a part-time cleaner. Back in 1937, when playwright Brendan Behan's family left the inner city to move to Crumlin, his father had tearfully asked his wife: "Kits, Kits, did we really have to leave Russell Street for this godforsaken place?"

By O'Toole's youth, Crumlin had become a community of sorts, disadvantaged but rich in social capital. It was not that different from where one of his villains, long-serving and controversial politician Charles Haughey, grew up on Dublin's north side. O'Toole's mild weakness for being "prolier than thou" (in the parlance of literary critic Terry Eagleton) leads him to caricature where he grew up as "Comanche country".

But O'Toole has travelled far from there. There are hilarious stories of a young Fintan encountering inspirational musical genius Seán Ó Riada herding a neighbour's stray litter of piglets into their sty in west Cork; of being offered a lift in the 1980s by Bishop Eamonn Casey of Galway, whose driving terrified him, and whose affair with an American woman in the 1970s came to light much later; and of his time in University College Dublin in the 1970s with a philosophy professor and future archbishop of Dublin.

// Ireland's past is here painted by Fintan O'Toole mainly through villains, victims, eccentrics and scandals //

Individuals subjected to the O'Toole treatment, long familiar to readers of *The Irish Times*, range from anachronistic clergymen and politicians in the 1950s and 1960s to businessmen and politicians of a later era eviscerated as charlatans, hypocrites or criminals. On a more sober note, O'Toole over-credits Ken Whitaker's 1958 policy document *Economic Development* with revolutionising the economy by leading to the arrival of US multinationals, but rather marginalises the role of the EU and the Single European Act. He also underestimates the extent of improvements in education and the health service. Brexit doesn't feature at all.

In O'Toole's view, the Irish became truly modern when voters, including his father, supported same-sex marriage in a referendum in 2015, making Ireland the first country to do so. The story ends three years later with an end to the constitutional ban on abortion. Even before these defining moments, O'Toole had come to realise that he "had been quite wrong about stability in Ireland, or at least that what I had been right about had now changed beyond recognition". Only retrospectively could he detect in the speeches of Pope John Paul II during his 1979 visit an "apprehension not so obvious at the time" that peak obedience to the church was in the past.

For over three decades, O'Toole has highlighted the Republic's failures, hypocrisies and delusions. Here, however, the bottom line is celebratory: "We ended up, not great, maybe not even especially good, but better than either – not so bad." **H**

Cormac Ó Gráda is the author of *Eating People is Wrong, and Other Essays on Famine, Its Past and Its Future* (Princeton University Press, 2015)



Path of progress People in Dublin celebrate the result of 2015's marriage equality referendum. Fintan O'Toole points to Ireland's legalisation of of same-sex marriage as a key moment in its journey to modernity

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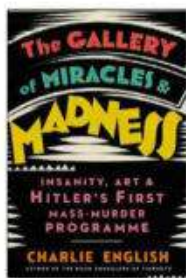
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MENTAL ILLNESS**The Gallery of Miracles and Madness**

by Charlie English

(William Collins, 336 pages, £20)

**Exhibition and atrocity**

In the 1920s, German doctor Hans Prinzhorn curated an extraordinary art collection, in which each piece was created by a psychiatric patient. It inspired artists across Europe, but Charlie English explores what happened next as Germany fell under the Nazis' spell. Modernist artworks were decried as "degenerate", and people with mental illnesses were targeted by an appalling extermination campaign.

FICTION**The Tale of the Tailor and the Three Dead Kings**

by Dan Jones

(Head of Zeus, 96 pages, £9.99)

**Evil in the medieval**

Hot on the heels of *Powers and Thrones*, his epic history of the Middle Ages, Dan Jones trades its symphonic grandeur for this atmospheric chamber piece. It's a reworking of a 15th-century ghost story later transcribed by medievalist (and connoisseur of the genre) MR James. A tailor is heading home via gloomy country lanes when he is assailed by eldritch apparitions: a fiery raven, a hound and a long-dead king...

MEMOIR**The Golden Apple of Samarkand**

by Lala Wilbraham

(Unicorn, 240 pages, £25)

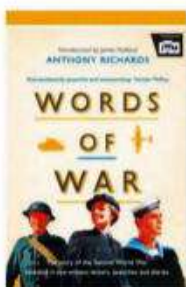
**Family drama**

Tracing her ancestry as it intertwines with the shifts and schisms of the 20th century, writer and translator Lala Wilbraham travels to eastern Europe thanks to an intriguing invitation to visit her grandmother's ancestral home. There, she uncovers a family history wrought in the most dramatic of terms: escape from revolutionary Russia, death in a Soviet gulag, and a quest for a new life on another continent.

WW2**Words of War**

by Anthony Richards

(Headline, 320 pages, £25)

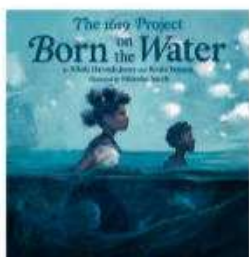
**Personal conflict**

Amid the fog of total war – its offensives, stratagems and staggering death tolls – it's easy to lose sight of the humanity, the points of light in the darkness. This book focuses on some of those individual stories via 100 letters, diary entries and other first-hand testimonies recorded during the Second World War and held at the Imperial War Museum. The selections, captivating in their immediacy, are often very moving.

CHILDREN**The 1619 Project: Born on the Water**

by Nikole Hannah-Jones, Renée Watson & Nikkolas Smith

(Kokila, 48 pages, £13.79)

**Illuminating history**

While the horrors of the slave trade can be a difficult subject to tackle with younger readers, this lyrical picture book offers a valuable entrance point. As part of the 1619 Project, a *New York Times Magazine* initiative to reframe slavery as integral to the US national narrative, it's American in focus – but the emphasis on emotively told individual stories means it will resonate with a wider audience.

20TH CENTURY**Free: Coming of Age at the End of History**

by Lea Ypi

(Allen Lane, 336 pages, £20)

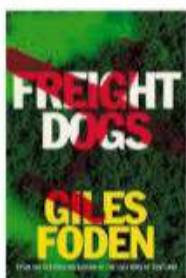
**End of days**

"I never asked myself about the meaning of freedom until the day I hugged Stalin," is a strong contender for 2021's most striking opening line. It's also typical of the mix of drama and wry humour that runs through Lea Ypi's account of growing up in Albania in the 1980s and 1990s, as communism finally fell and everything changed. How those changes affected Ypi's family, and her view of the world, is enthralling.

FICTION**Freight Dogs**

by Giles Foden

(W&N, 416 pages, £18.99)

**World on fire**

Set against a backdrop of the civil war that engulfed what's now the Democratic Republic of Congo between 1996 and 1997, this novel charts the experiences of Manu, a young man fleeing the violence. He joins up with a gang of international mercenaries trafficking weapons between the warring nations, before his life enters a new chapter as he heads to Europe. But trouble is never far behind.

PUZZLES**The British History Puzzle Book**

by Philip Parker

(British Library Publishing, 256 pages, £14.99)

**Like the Bible, perhaps? (4,4)**

If you enjoy pitting your wits against our crossword (see page 94) or the history quizzes on our website at [historyextra.com/quiz](https://www.historyextra.com/quiz/), this book is for you. Featuring hundreds of questions on a wide range of topics from British history, and studded with illustrations and maps from the British Library's collections, it's a great way to test your knowledge – and, as Philip Parker points out, spark new historical exploration. **H**



Spirited away

Fumei Chōja, as the Indian king Sutasoma was called in Japan, watches a nine-tailed fox spirit emerge from the clouds in this drawing by Hokusai

VISIT

Hokusai's forgotten works

At the British Museum, 103 beautiful drawings, each no larger than a postcard, are on show to the public for the first time in history. They were created by the celebrated Japanese artist Hokusai (1760–1849), who conjured up what he thought the earliest civilisations in China and India could have looked like, as well as scenes from the natural world.

It's a quirk of fate that these drawings survived. Hokusai had intended for them to be turned into printing blocks for a book, which would have destroyed the illustrations. But the project was abandoned and the images forgotten, until being revealed once more in this new exhibition.

Hokusai: The Great Picture Book of Everything

The British Museum, London / 30 September–30 January /
Booking recommended / britishmuseum.org

明長者

ENCOUNTERS

86 DIARY: LISTEN / WATCH / VISIT

By Jonathan Wright and Rhiannon Davies

92 EXPLORE... Michelham Priory, East Sussex



LISTEN

More learned talk

Count them: there are more than 900 episodes of *In Our Time*, an age in broadcast terms, and they are all still available to listen to. After all these years, the show remains one of BBC Radio 4's weekly highlights, thanks in great part to presenter Melvyn Bragg, a man with a keen sense of when to hurry his guests along and when to give them time.

Forthcoming episodes include a discussion on the Manhattan Project to develop nuclear weapons on Thursday 7 October (pictured above is a nuclear weapon test in 1957). Also listen out for shows on Anne Brontë's final novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, on 30 September, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, one of the largest countries in 16th/17th-century Europe, on 14 October.

In Our Time

BBC Radio 4 / Thursdays from 30 September



Prince Philip and Princess Elizabeth on their honeymoon, 1947. A one-off documentary remembers the late consort

WATCH

Royal salute

The life of Prince Philip, who died in April, was by any estimation eventful. Born into the Greek and Danish royal families in June 1921, he was exiled from his home country of Greece when he was just 18 months old. Educated in France, Germany and, most famously, Gordonstoun School in Scotland, Philip joined the Royal Navy as a teenager and served through the Second World War.

Then in July 1947, he was engaged to Princess Elizabeth, a prelude to becoming the longest-serving consort in royal history: a difficult role that he fulfilled with no little humour and grace.

An affectionate and revealing BBC documentary, originally intended to mark Philip's 100th birthday, salutes a man who was at the heart of the royal family for most of his life – and indeed a central figure in the life of a nation. Featuring interviews with senior royals, including Philip's children and adult grandchildren, it offers insights into his character and also rare glimpses of his study, private office and library at Buckingham Palace.

The filmmakers had the opportunity to meet Philip's long-serving staff, in addition to being given special access to the queen's private cine film collection.

Prince Philip: The Royal Family Remembers

BBC iPlayer / streaming now



An actor plays the part of Sergeant Ruben Rivers, from the 761st Tank Battalion. Fighting for their country did not stop black troops enduring racism

WATCH

War on two fronts

When the Allies fought through Europe in the wake of D-Day, African-American soldiers were among those in the vanguard. Despite this, the US military did not officially desegregate until after the Second World War, and black troops all too often faced overt racism as well as the enemy.

This was certainly true for the men of the 761st Tank Battalion, which fought with distinction at the battle of the Bulge and was the first African-American armoured unit to enter combat in the war. A one-off documentary tells the story of the battalion, nicknamed the Black Panthers, which lived up to its motto to "Come Out Fighting".

The Black Panthers of WW2

Yesterday / October



Dame Judi Dench is one of many celebrities to delve into their family histories in *Who Do You Think You Are?*'s 18th series

WATCH

Personal histories

Many long-running hit series rest on a deceptively straightforward premise, and that's certainly true of *Who Do You Think You Are?* At first glance, it's a programme that's driven by its celebrity participants. But below the surface it's a show that draws viewers in because even the most hardbitten guests start to identify with the stories of their forebears. Remember Jeremy Paxman coming over all weepy in his episode?

For this 18th series, those exploring their family histories are ex-politician and broadcaster Ed Balls; actor Dame Judi Dench; singer Pixie Lott; comedians Joe Lycett and Josh Widdicombe; former footballer and TV presenter Alex Scott; and – older readers may wish to check with a young person at this point – YouTuber Joe Sugg.

Who Do You Think You Are?

BBC One / From mid-October

WEEKLY TV & RADIO

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HISTORY ON THE AIRWAVES

"Questions around refugees have been with us for a century, and we keep largely failing to answer them"



Migration expert **DR KATY LONG** discusses her new series on a century of refugee crises, contemplating what we owe those fleeing persecution and how the handling of such displacements in the past offers us valuable lessons today

Your series deals with the history of refugee politics. Doesn't that seem most apposite in the wake of the Taliban retaking Afghanistan?

Questions around refugees have been with us for a century, and we keep trying – and to a large degree failing – to answer them. When the first images started coming out from Kabul's airport, we were interviewing a survivor of the *Kindertransport* [a mission to rescue thousands of children from Nazi Germany]. He was talking about his father not being able to get a visa to escape Berlin, and so putting his six-and-a-half-year-old son on a train. He said that, in the scenes on TV, he could see echoes of his own story. He was lucky enough to get out, but his father died in Auschwitz.

How is the series structured?

It's looking at a century of refugee crises and framed around the questions that we, as the international community, have asked repeatedly through that time. Who is a refugee? And once we've decided who they are, what do we owe them? The second programme examines: what is it like to **live in a refugee camp?** Some have been in existence for 60 years. The last episode considers: how do you solve a refugee crisis? Part of the reason the League of Nations started to get involved in 1921 was because they wanted to solve refugee crises, not just manage them.

What was the situation in 1921?

You had a huge refugee crisis in Turkey. The Greeks and Turks were at war, but more particularly you had Russian refugees fleeing the revolution into Constantinople, a city under military occupation. You had all of these destitute Russians, who'd had their citizenships taken away by Lenin. This left them dependent on humanitarian aid, which was hugely expensive. You also had

Armenians who'd escaped the genocide, and Assyrians coming into the city too.

They brought in Fridtjof Nansen [a Norwegian explorer who became the League of Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees]. The solutions he came up with seem incredible to modern ears. It was all about finding work for refugees via the International Labour Organisation and giving them what were called Nansen passports, so they could travel to get work.

What lessons do you think these crises offer us today?

There are so many echoes back, and we are still struggling to answer the questions with which the series deals. Hopefully, we can use this history to take a closer look at how we should be answering them, and to think about why so often we have failed to do the right thing. **H**

100 Years of Exile will be broadcast by BBC Radio 4 from 5 October



Refugees queue to flee Afghanistan after the Taliban's takeover, August 2021

WATCH

Could things only get better?

In 1997, the Labour party swept to power with a landslide general election victory. After 18 years of Conservative government, Tony Blair gave a victory speech in which he spoke of "a new dawn". New Labour was at the apex of its popularity.

For all the optimism of this moment, this was a story with its roots in failure. In 1983, Labour had slumped to defeat under Michael Foot, receiving just 27.6 per cent of the vote. Among those Labour politicians who did manage to win seats, there were two new MPs: Blair and Gordon Brown.

Initially working in the same office, and along the way supported by key figures such as Peter Mandelson and Patricia Hewitt, the duo set out to modernise the party. There



Gordon Brown and Tony Blair in 1997. They worked together to modernise Labour, but tensions often ran high

were tensions from early on, though, which would ultimately sour the relationship between these two ambitious politicians.

Featuring interviews with those who were there and from the makers of *Thatcher: A Very British Revolution*, a new five-part series traces New Labour's rise and fall, and re-evaluates it at a point when the country's political culture seems especially divided.

Blair & Brown: The New Labour Revolution

BBC Two / early October

VISIT

Golden treasures

The Saka people of the Steppe in central Asia thrived around 2,500 years ago. They were as talented at crafts as they were at making war, with gold work a particular speciality of theirs. Among the treasures they sculpted, now on show in a new exhibition in Cambridge, is a golden scabbard for a dagger intricately decorated with turquoise and lapis lazuli, and thousands of tiny golden beads just 1 millimetre in diameter.

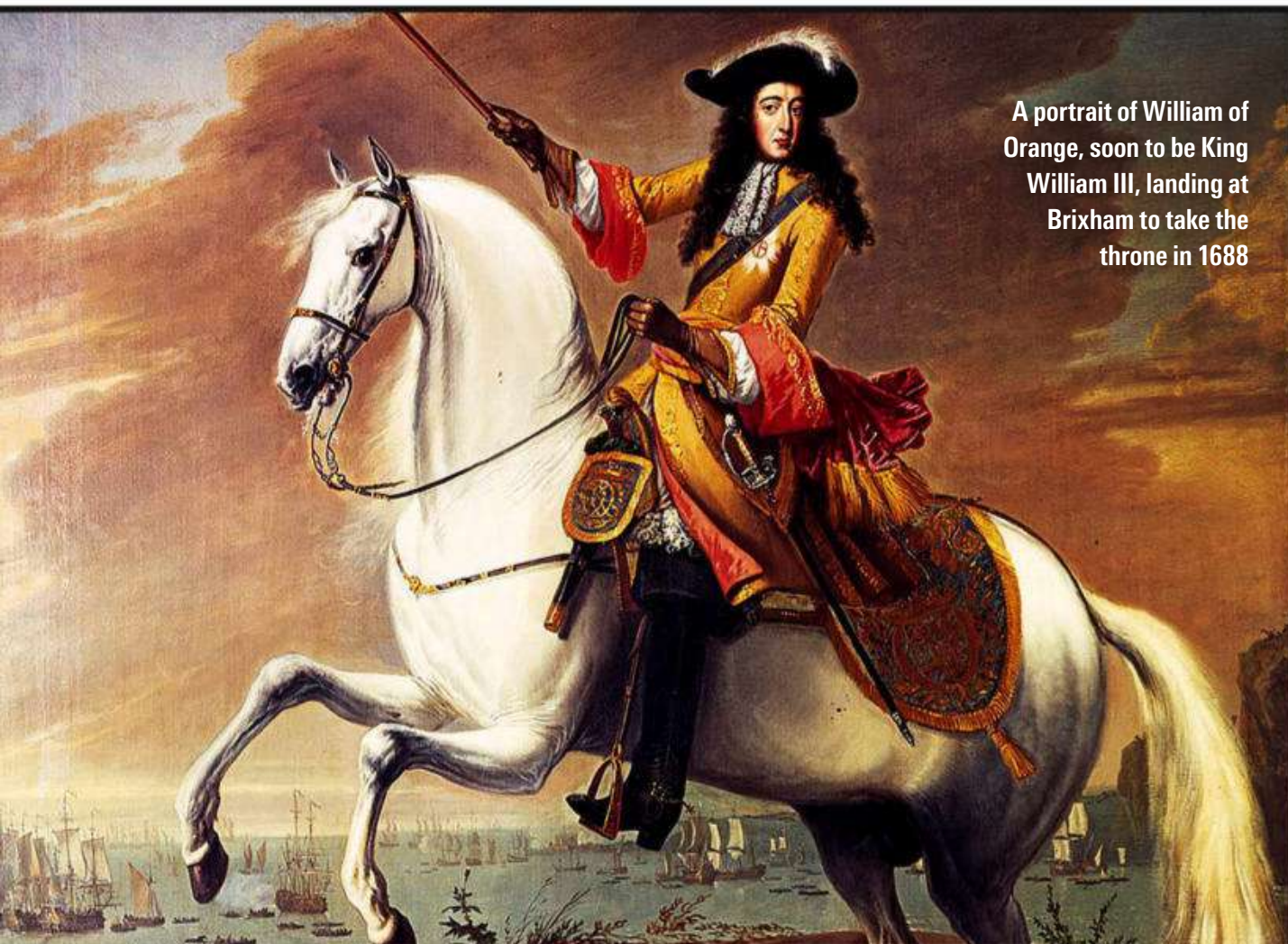
The Saka constructed elaborate burial mounds, with the elites interred with their horses and precious objects. It was from such tombs in east Kazakhstan that many artefacts that appear in the displays were unearthed.

This exhibition aims to shine a light on a fascinating culture that, outside Kazakhstan, has largely been overlooked.

Gold of the Great Steppe

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge /
28 Sept–30 Jan / Booking required /
fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

A snow leopard made from gold. The Saka had great respect for animals and would sculpt their likenesses



A portrait of William of Orange, soon to be King William III, landing at Brixham to take the throne in 1688

VISIT

Picture perfect

For much of history, most people in Britain would not have had a chance to see their monarch in the flesh. Yet when the art of portraiture took Europe by storm from the 16th century onwards, subjects could finally come face to face with their rulers. Some kings and queens opted for elegant poses; others were keen to convey intense power.

Now, more than 150 portraits of kings, queens and various consorts from five dynasties are being shown in a major exhibition at the National Maritime Museum. Featuring the work of some of the most influential artists in Britain's history, it reveals how royalty has changed over the past 500 years.

Tudors to Windsors: British Royal Portraits

The National Maritime Museum, London /
Until 31 October / Booking required / rmg.co.uk



This tapestry was stitched by local textile artists and embroiderers to commemorate the Declaration of Arbroath

VISIT

In pursuit of freedom

In 1320, a group of Scottish barons sent a declaration from Arbroath Abbey, in Angus, to Pope John XXII, in which they implored him to recognise Robert the Bruce as the legitimate king of Scotland. He had recently been excommunicated as a result of the Scots not following the papacy's urgings to make peace with the invading English.

Now, more than 700 years on, the Declaration of Arbroath is regarded as

one of the most significant texts in Scotland's history, an affirmation of the country's independence. Arbroath Abbey has opened a new display to commemorate the document in its visitor centre. Through 50 artefacts – a highlight being a specially commissioned reproduction of the declaration – the exhibition will share its incredible story, as well as the story of the abbey itself and its place in the history of Scotland.

Arbroath Abbey

Arbroath, Scotland / Open now /
Booking required / historicenvironment.scot

WATCH

Ways of seeing

What can art reveal about humanity's relationship with nature down the centuries? It's a question asked by art historian James Fox in a BBC Four series that takes viewers on a global tour of artworks dating from the prehistoric era up to the present. One of Fox's central ideas is that art and culture explain much about our deepest ideas, hopes and fears. If you know where to look, he argues, you can find clues about how our ancestors saw the natural world and their place within it.

Illustrating this thesis, Fox highlights cave art, the pyramids of ancient Guatemala, Egyptian sculptures, Assyrian carvings, Ming dynasty paintings, Japanese gardens, 19th-century landscapes painted by awe-struck Romantics, and abstract pieces too.

Drawing on anthropology, philosophy, science and religion, the show features interviews with scientists, historians and writers. And looking at the challenges that lie ahead, Fox considers what our past attitudes to the natural world may have to tell us about the years that lie ahead, years when we will have to contend with the climate emergency. **H**

Nature & Us: A Journey Through Art

BBC Four / October



A Japanese temple in Kyoto. James Fox considers art from all over the globe to explore our relationship with nature

A wonder over the water

Founded by the Augustinian order, transformed into a Tudor manor house and used as billets for Second World War troops, the picturesque Michelham Priory captures nearly eight centuries of English history within its moat. **SIÂN REES** spends a day at the East Sussex attraction

Michelham Priory is an English jewel in the East Sussex countryside, some 10 miles north of Eastbourne. The sunshine glitters off the leaded windows of the medieval priory turned Tudor manor house onto the scented lawns enclosed by a reed-filled moat where ducks dive and squabble. The Augustinian priory was founded in 1229 by descendants of the Normans who landed down the coast and seized everything in sight, building castles to keep their new lands and religious buildings to enlist divine aid.

For just over 300 years, Michelham Priory was home to a rolling cast of Augustinian canons and lay staff, before their church and cloister were destroyed in the Reformation. The airy, high-ceilinged Prior's room is intact, though, as is the grille through which he interviewed visitors. On display today are documents revealing that the brethren were not always well behaved over the centuries: the litany of failures to meet Augustinian standards include charges of selling off priory treasures via the back door and fornicating with a married woman.

The moat was dug in the late 14th century, after the Black Death, to guard against future epidemics, raids from the French, and, more prosaically, to stop the canons' livestock

straying. In the dissolution of the monasteries, Michelham was seized in 1537 and granted by Henry VIII first to Thomas Cromwell, still in favour, just, and then to Anne of Cleves, whose rejection was partly the cause of Cromwell's downfall. Thereafter, it was lived in by a succession of owners and tenant farmers, and the stories of these times – including the shooting of a rabid cat after it attacked a horse, and the death of a servant while fording the river for a wager – have been excavated from local papers.

In the 1940s, the house rejoined the national story by hosting evacuees from Rotherhithe, land girls and Allied troops during the Second World War. Fraternisation between the last two is commemorated in one of the rooms: two land girls upstairs, realising there was a trapdoor into the massive stone hearth of the room in which Canadian officers were dining, attempted to scare them with ghostly tappings and hoots, until one crashed through the wooden floor and got caught at the waist. The Canadians, alerted by thrashing legs in pyjamas, had to rush upstairs and haul her out.

Although Michelham was gifted to the Sussex Archaeological Society in the 1950s, it still has the feel of a family house, and it is largely staffed by volunteers who clearly love the place and know it intimately. Now, its wood-panelled rooms blend the austerity of the cloister with the life of the families who came later – a bedwarmer here, a cradle there, and women's watercolours displayed in the family drawing room. There are still staff flats above the open rooms. I was shown around by Lucy, who had lived there as a child when her father was property manager. Any ghosts, I asked? "No," she said, disappointingly. "But... it changes at night," she added. "There's... a feeling." That was the reply I wanted. **H**

Siân Rees is a historian, author and occasional contributor to *BBC History Magazine*

VISIT For more information on visiting Michelham Priory and Gardens, go to sussexpast.co.uk/attraction/michelham-priory-house-gardens



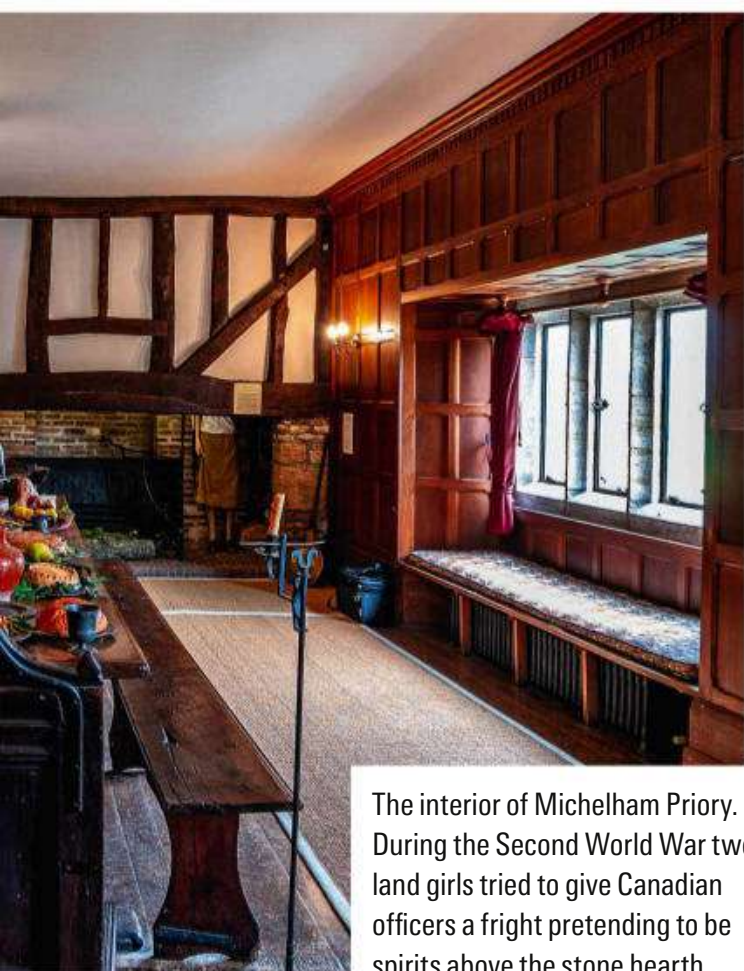
The refectory (above), which has been added to and repaired many times, from across the moat. The Grade I listed building was used as a farmhouse in the 19th century



A group of boys help clear the Michelham Priory moat during restoration works in 1967



ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES



The interior of Michelham Priory. During the Second World War two land girls tried to give Canadian officers a fright pretending to be spirits above the stone hearth



A stained glass window, designed by Marguerite Douglas Thompson and added in the late 20th century, in the surviving Prior's room



A staircase inside the priory. The building was seized during the Dissolution, and while the church, chapter house and dormitory were destroyed, the refectory was saved and extended

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How to Slay a Dragon

A Fantasy Hero's Guide to the Real Middle Ages

By Cait Stevenson

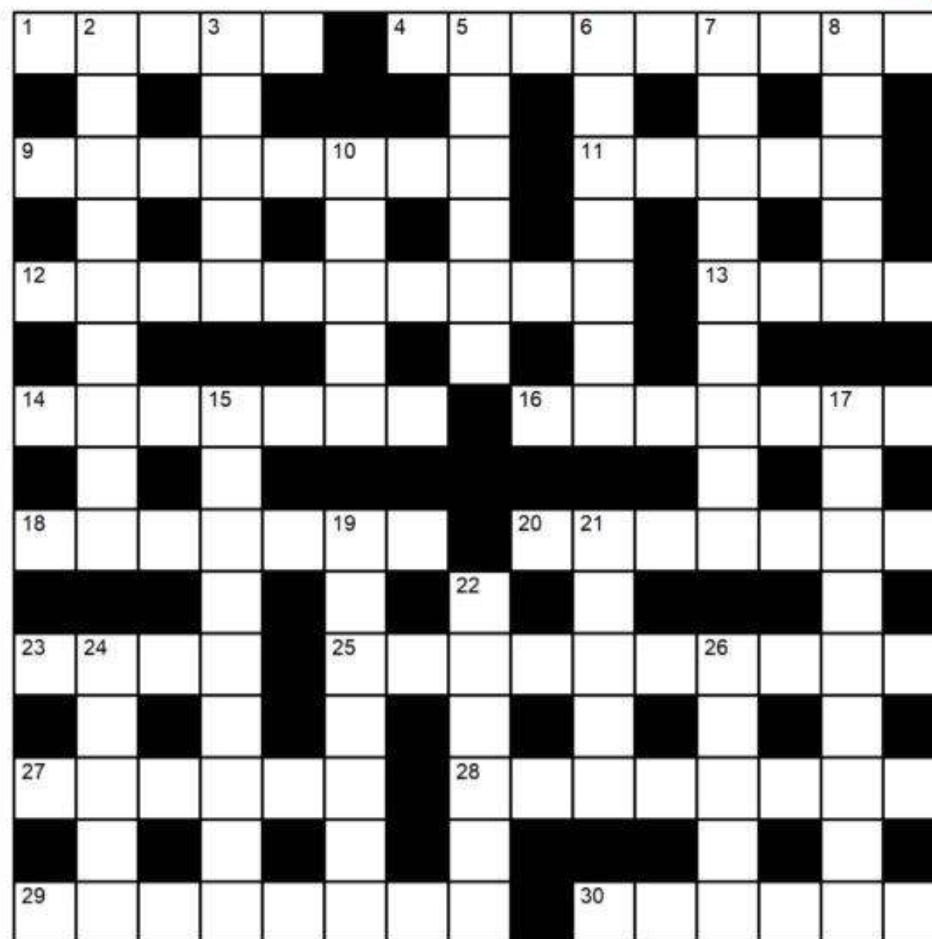
What question should you ask a magic mirror? How do you outsmart a genie? And where should you dig for buried treasure? Learn the answers to these questions and many more in this how-to guide to solving epic quests during the medieval period.

Across

- 1** Feudal bond between a man and his overlord, overriding his duty to any other lord he served (5)
4 A popular Victorian and Edwardian male garment, with full skirts (5,4)
9 See 13 across
11 Island on which Finlaggan Castle was the seat of Clan Donald (MacDonald) and Lords of the Isles (5)
12 Name given to the effect produced in central London in 1858 by untreated sewage in the river Thames (5,5)
13/9 After the annulment of her marriage to an English monarch, she became known as the "King's Beloved Sister" (4,2,6)
14 A former Spanish kingdom, based around the city of Pamplona (7)
16 An old term for "wharf" popular in north-eastern England (6)
18 English scholar who translated the Bible into English, resulting in his execution for heresy in 1536 (7)
20 Plural of a nautical measurement unit, whose name derives from the old English for "outstretched arms" (7)
23 See 3 down
25 Byzantine general, one of history's great military leaders (in the service of Emperor Justinian I) (10)
27 The death of this prince paved the way for the ascension of his brother to the English throne (as Henry VIII) (6)
28 Sir Steven ____, historian and author of the three-volume *A History of the Crusades* (8)
29 The building of the Antonine Wall, across the central belt of this country, was started by the Romans in AD 142 (8)
30 Anglo-Saxon earl of Northumbria, a bitter enemy of his brother, Harold II (6)

Down

- 2** In short, the 1987 agreement by the US and the Soviet Union to scrap certain nuclear weapons (3,6)
3/23 Her country's unpreparedness for the



Yom Kippur War led to this woman resigning as prime minister (5,4)

- 5** The Emancipation Manifesto of 1861 and consequent reforms led to serfdom being officially abolished in this country (6)
6 The Hampshire village of Hambledon had an important role in the early development of this major sport (7)
7 The ____ Standing Stones (anglicised form), an ancient circular structure on the Isle of Lewis (9)
8 Name applied to people who spoke an archaic Indo-European language, adopted as a racial category, eg by the Nazis (5)
10 Armour protection for the face (5)
15 The "home of the British Army", scene of a major IRA attack in 1972 (9)
17 Babylonian king, reigned c1792–c1750 BC, formulator of one of the earliest legal codes (9)
19 The first president of this African country was Joseph Jenkins Roberts, who had been born in America (7)
21 George ____, British admiral noted for his circumnavigation of the globe (1740–44) (5)
22 ____ Russel Wallace formulated the theory of evolution independently of his contemporary, Charles Darwin (6)
24 Alternative spelling of ____ Streona ("the Acquisitive"), appointed as ealdorman of Mercia in 1007 (5)
26 The ____, or a Survey of the Revolutions of Empires (1791), an influential work of the French philosopher, the comte de Volney (5)

Compiled by **Eddie James**



What are these ancient standing stones on the Isle of Lewis called? (7 down)

HOW TO ENTER

● Open to residents of the UK (& Channel Islands). Post entries to **BBC History Magazine, November 2021 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to **november2021@historycomps.co.uk** by 5pm on **27 October 2021**. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners' names will appear in the Christmas 2021 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Media Company Privacy Policy at [immediatemediacompany.co.uk/privacy-policy/privacy/](https://www.immediatemediacompany.co.uk/privacy-policy/privacy/). ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write 'NO INFO' on your entry. ● Branded BBC titles are licensed from or published jointly with BBC Studios (the commercial arm of the BBC). Please tick here ☐ if you'd like to receive regular newsletters, special offers and promotions from BBC Studios by email. Your information will be handled in accordance with the BBC Studios privacy policy: [bbcstudios.com/privacy](https://www.bbcstudios.com/privacy). – [bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct](https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct)

Solution to our September 2021 crossword

Across 9 Betsy Ross 10 Andorra 11 Arrian 12 Amun-re
 13 Sheriff 15 Krishna 17 Manipur 20 Scythia 22 George 24 Fuhrer
 26 Cherokee 27 Ironsides 28 Echo
Down 1 Napalm 2 Han dynasty 3 Aberdeen 4 Strauss 5 Mycale
 6 Moor 7 Asian flu 14 Inigo Jones 16 Rasputin 18 Algiers
 19/8 Vasco da Gama 21 Heresy 23 Goethe 25 Rood

Five winners of Fallen Idols

M Lawson, Greater Manchester; M Cook, Suffolk; H Anstey, Norfolk; S Pegum, Barnet; D Lord, Surrey

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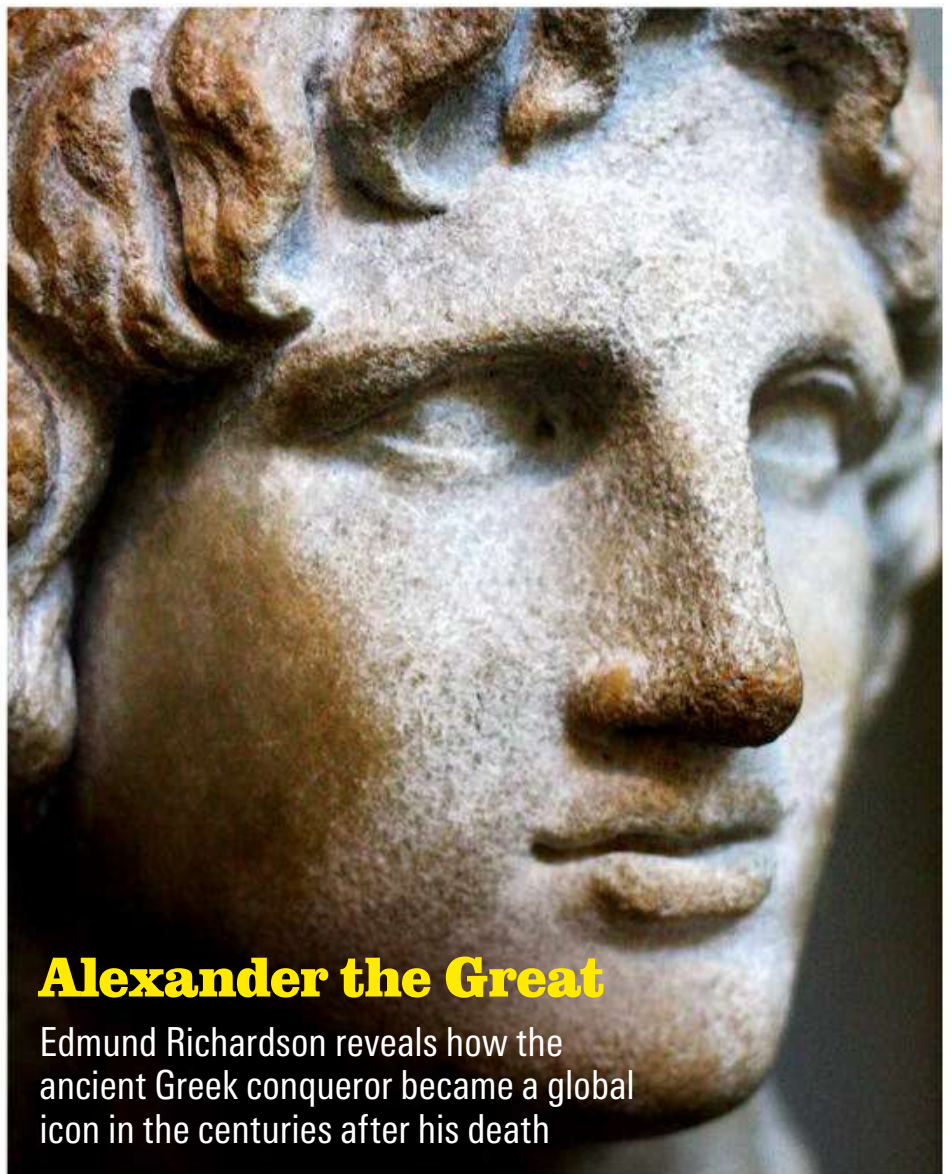
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A panel of expert historians consider the long history of foreign interventions in the land



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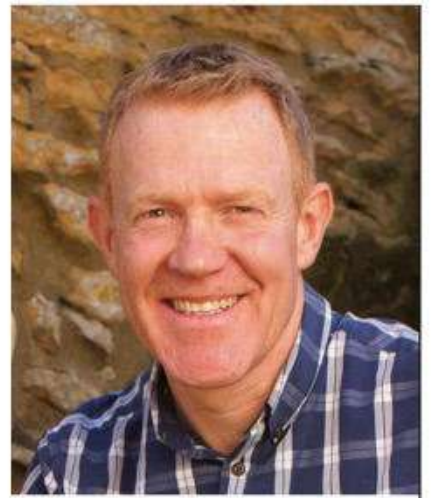


MY HISTORY HERO

Countryfile presenter, farmer and author **Adam Henson** chooses

Robert Bakewell

1725–95



BBC *Countryfile* presenter **Adam Henson** runs the Cotswold Farm Park. His first children's book, *A Year on Adam's Farm*, is out now



Robert Bakewell shown in a contemporary portrait. "The regional breeds that he helped develop are part of what makes Britain what it is today," says Adam Henson

IN PROFILE

Robert Bakewell was an English agriculturalist who pioneered the systematic selective breeding of sheep, cattle and horses. Born in Leicestershire, he is best known for his breeding of sheep with superior wool, such as the Lincoln Longwool, which led to the creation of many modern breeds.

// Bakewell played a key part in the development of early breed selection which has helped give so many areas of the country an identity //

When did you first hear about Robert Bakewell?

My father was a farmer, like me. He was interested in the history of animal breeding. To showcase rare breeds he opened the Cotswold Farm Park in 1971 and would tell me about this man who did so much to shape British agriculture. Dad set out the Farm Park livestock displays so they suited periods of history, from the Iron Age to the modern day. To help represent the agricultural revolution paddock, we had a 20ft Foamex board cut-out of Bakewell sat on a horse, so I've been aware of him for years.

What kind of man was he? He was a real trailblazer when it came to improving livestock. He was also one of the first people to start selective breeding, coupling the best rams with the best ewes, and the best bulls with the best cows. He was quite a large man, so he didn't just understand the importance of the quality of food, he obviously ate well too!

What made Bakewell a hero? The vital role he played in the development of British farm breeds and, in particular, regional breeds. Bakewell played a key part in the development of early breed selection, which has helped give so many areas of the country an identity – be it Hereford or Angus, which are famous for their cattle, or the Cotswolds, which is famous for its sheep. These regional breeds are part of what makes Britain what it is today – and they have been taken all over the world by those who settled in places like Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

What was Bakewell's finest hour? In my view, it was the creation of the Leicester Longwool Sheep, with its long, lustrous fleece, which was created by mating ewes and rams with high-quality wool. We sometimes forget that the wool trade – which was built, to a large extent, on longwool breeds with fabulous fleeces – had a huge impact on the nation's wealth.

Can you see any parallels between his life and your own? Yes, we both worked with livestock. One of my favourite aspects of farming is selecting the correct bull or ram to go with a herd or flock and looking forward to how the offspring turn out!

What do you think Bakewell would make of modern farm-animal breeding?

I think he would regard some modern selective breeding as a step too far. Due to breeding-in traits like double muscling, Belgian Blue cows often can't give birth and have to have a caesarean. After around three caesareans, a cow will not be able to breed any more. Pushing so hard for production in livestock can cause welfare issues, and I'm not sure that would have sat easily with Bakewell. **H**

Adam Henson was talking to York Membery

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